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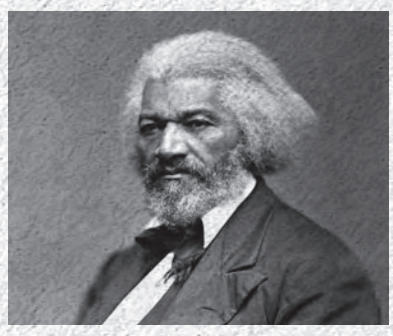
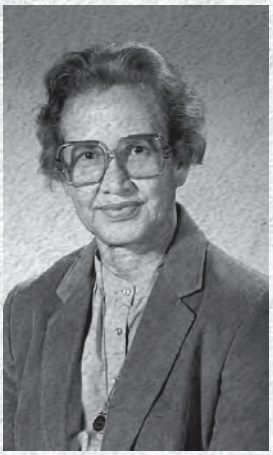
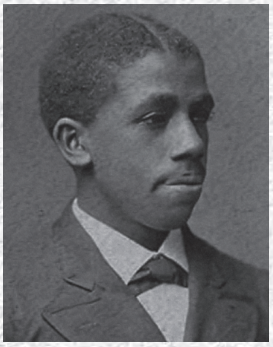
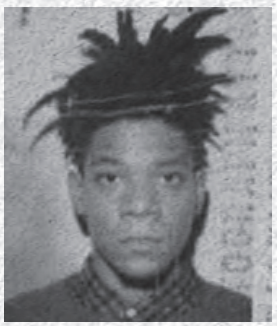
Black VOICES







FROM STRUGGLE TO STRENGTH



THE IMPACT OF BLACK HISTORY ON AMERICA'S **IDENTITY**

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.”

— BARACK OBAMA

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026

2026 marks the 100th year of Black History Commemoratives honoring the vision of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the Founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, ASNLH. According to the creators of the themes, "Over the years, the themes reflect changes in how people of African American descent in the United States have viewed themselves, the influence of social movements on social ideals, and the aspirations of the Black Community. The first theme was "Civilization, A World Achievement. The last theme, 2025, was African Americans and Labor. The theme for 2026 is "A History of Black History Commemoratives". The founders of Black History Month encourage us to examine how celebrating Black History and Black Life has influenced and improved the status of Black people in today's society.

2026 also marks the celebration of the 250th signing of the Declaration of Independence which affirms that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" The Mission of the America 250, Inc. Commission is "...We aim to inspire our fellow Americans to reflect on our past, strengthen our love of country, and renew our commitment to the ideals of democracy through programs that educate, engage and unite us as a nation. These are inspirational and hopeful statements, similar in intent to the Mission of the ASNLH. Recent leadership mandates a disregard for democracy, and efforts to diminish Black Americans' contributions have lessened our nation's historical stature.

How does one celebrate 250 years of profound history, without declaration of victories won, battles lost, wealth, and power gained by the few through the forced labor of millions of enslaved individuals who are still waiting for their $40.00 and a mule? A nation achieves greatness by being honest, humane, and appreciative of those who helped build it. Paying a long-overdue debt might help the country achieve racial and social justice.

It is my hope that rather than banning books, erasing historical sites, establishing voting impediments, suppressing freedom of speech when it relates to DEI, and other racial and social justice initiatives, we accept and apologize for centuries of hate and oppression towards those who can say with pride and certainty that they built America.

Black Americans, citizens and patriots, will continue to contribute to its greatness. Let us celebrate the legitimate birth of our nation by honoring not only the Founders of our Country, but also those who built it through their unpaid labor, loss of life, and unquestionable contributions.

CHARLOTTE KING
Founder and Editor-in-Chief, Lewes, DE

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... Ending racism and its corrosive consequences

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FEB 21 | 6PM

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FEB 22 | 2PM

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Family of slaves in Georgia, c. 1850 / Wikimedia Commons

From Borrowed Labor to Bold Leadership: The Black Role in America's Wealth Story

BY JESSICA R. CLARK

"Borrowed Labor," a politically correct euphemism for slave labor, reaches back to the fourth to sixth centuries, when people became indentured servants, who were primarily poor Europeans, agreeing to pay off a debt, such as rent or taxes, over a specified term owed to a king. Such bondage continued over several generations into the New World colonies.

The term "borrowed labor" was first quoted by Jean-Baptiste Say (January 5, 1767 – November 15, 1832), a liberal French economist and businessman. Born in Lyon, France, in 1785, he was sent to England to complete his education. He was one of the first economists to study entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs as organizers and leaders of the economy. Say saw labor as a factor of production and argued in favor of competition, free trade, and lifting restraints on business. It is likely that the first American colonists, who were businessmen, might have promoted Say's theories and his "law of markets"—Say claimed that the production of a product creates demand for another product by providing something of value that can be exchanged for that other product. So, production is the source of demand.

Yet, Say also described slave labor as "this vicious system of production" where masters pocket profits, degrading everyone involved, contrasting with true free labor. His idea of borrowed labor implied voluntary exchange, the stark coercion of slavery.

Slavery's Deep Economic and Societal Hold in America

As demand for labor grew, so did the need for indentured workers. After the establishment of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607,

borrowed labor was first used to attract many skilled and unskilled laborers, as well as some petty criminals, in exchange for passage to the English colonies in the New World. They were initially treated as indentured labor or as indentured servants with the same rights as white people, versus enslaved people. Some laws were in place to protect their rights. Still, harsh working conditions and workers' contracts were often extended for infractions such as violating the law, running away, or becoming pregnant.

Landowners, reluctant to deal with freed laborers and their demands for land and other rights, switched to using enslaved people as a more profitable alternative. Slaves were first introduced in the American colonies in 1619 when The White Lion, a Portuguese slave ship, brought 20 enslaved Black people to the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia, in exchange at auction for food.

Laws treating Black people as property rather than as people were first introduced in Massachusetts in 1641, when the legislature legalized slavery and stripped away whatever freedoms Black laborers had until then. This preference continued in the colonies and then the United States until the abolition of slavery in 1865.

Throughout the 17th century, European settlers in North America turned to enslaved Africans as a cheaper, more plentiful labor source than Indigenous populations and indentured servants. Estimates of nearly 12.5 million enslaved Africans were brought to the Americas by European and American slave traders. In 1662, the Virginia colony, and later other English colonies, established that a slave's legal status was inherited through the mother. As a result, the children of enslaved women legally became slaves. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, European and American slave merchants kidnapped enslaved Africans, transported them to the American colonies, and sold them at auction, forcing them into slavery. Slavery was never widespread in the North as it was in the South, but many northern businessmen grew rich on the slave trade and investments in southern plantations. Enslaved men and women also worked in northern cities such as Boston and New York, as well as in southern cities such as Charleston, Richmond, and Baltimore.

During the 18th century, approximately 6.5 million enslaved persons were transported to the Americas to work mainly on tobacco, wheat, indigo, sugar, cotton, and rice plantations along the southern Atlantic Coast, from the Chesapeake Bay colonies of Maryland and Virginia south to Georgia. At auction, enslaved people were sold to the person who bid the most money, and family members were often split up.

Before the rise of the American Revolution, the first debates to abolish slavery emerged. Black and white abolitionists contributed to the enactment of new legislation, gradually abolishing slavery in some northern states such as Vermont and Pennsylvania. However, these laws emancipated only the newly born children of enslaved women.

The first U.S. president, George Washington, owned enslaved people, along with many of the presidents who followed him. Thomas Jefferson, the third president, was born on a large Virginia estate run on enslaved labor. He wrote "all men are created equal" and consistently and publicly voiced strong moral opposition to slavery, calling it a "hideous blot." In a deleted passage from the Declaration of Independence, he called it a "moral depravity, threatening the nation." Yet, he enslaved more than six hundred people and struggled to free his slaves, viewing them as property and caught in a system he couldn't escape. Expressing racist views about Black people, he wrote that he suspected Black people to be inferior to white people, and he doubted that the two races could coexist peacefully after emancipation and could not share the same government as free people. Jefferson relied on and profited from slave labor for Monticello's economic power, as did many other slave owners. Jefferson never entirely freed the people he enslaved, embodying the national hypocrisy of founding a nation on liberty while practicing bondage.

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Though the U.S. Congress outlawed the African slave trade in 1808, the domestic trade flourished, and the enslaved population in the United States nearly tripled over the next 40 years. By 1860, bondage had reached almost 4 million, with more than half living in the South's cotton-producing states.

By the mid-19th century, westward expansion and the abolition movement provoked the great slavery debate that would tear the nation apart in the Civil War. Though the Union victory freed the nation's four million enslaved people, the legacy of slavery continued to influence American history from the Reconstruction to the Civil Rights Movement that emerged a century after emancipation and beyond.

Some Notable Black Economists in the Early Days of Our Country

Political economists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries were divided over whether or not the system of slave labor was profitable.

Notable Black economists range from historical pioneers like **Abram Lincoln Harris, Jr.**, the first nationally recognized Black economist (January 17, 1899 to November 6, 1863), academic, anthropologist, and social critic of the condition of Black people and Black businesses in the United States.

Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander (January 2, 1898 – November 1, 1989), a civil rights activist of the early to mid-20th century, earned her master's degree in 1919 and was one of three Black women to earn a Ph.D. in economics in 1921 from an American university. In 1927, she was the first Black woman admitted to the University of Pennsylvania Law School, to receive a law degree; the first to be admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar; and the first to practice law in the state. Also at Penn, she specialized in estate, family, and civil rights law from 1927 until her retirement in 1982. She was the first woman to serve as secretary to the National Bar Association. She opened her own law office in 1959.

Phyllis Ann Wallace (June 9, 1921 – January 10, 1993) was the first woman to receive a doctorate in economics from Yale in 1948. She dedicated much of her professional life to studying data on workplace discrimination. She joined the faculty of what is now called the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Institute for Work and Employment Research. She became the first woman to receive tenure at MIT Sloan. When Mount Holyoke conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws degree on Professor Wallace in 1983, the citation stated, "Beginning your career at a time when neither Blacks nor women had a fair chance, you have witnessed great progress toward equal employment opportunity – progress due, in no small measure, to your scholarship on the economics of discrimination in the labor market." When she retired in 1986, scholars in industrial and labor relations and economics from around the world gathered at MIT for a conference in her honor. The Sloan School endowed the Phyllis A. Wallace Doctoral Fellows Fund, which provides support for Black students admitted to the school's doctoral program.

Contemporary Black Economists

Contemporary economics is the modern study and application of economic principles, focusing on real-world issues such as globalization, technology, inequality, climate change, and financial crises. Updated data, advanced methods (game theory, econometrics), and interdisciplinary approaches are used to analyze global challenges and policy impacts, addressing complexity and uncertainty.

Some Black contemporary economists are **Lisa Cook** (born in 1964), who earned a Ph.D. in economics from the University of California, Berkeley, and became a professor of economics and international relations at Michigan State University. From 1997 to 2002, she was a visiting assistant professor at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and Harvard Business School, and deputy director of Africa Research at Harvard's Center for International Development. She is considered an authority on international economics. She also served on the board of

directors of the Federal Reserve Board of Chicago and was a research associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. From 2021 to the present, she has served as the first Black woman on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. Cook is regarded as one of the few prominent Black female economists and, within academia, is honored for her efforts to mentor Black women and advocate for their inclusion in the field of economics. Since 2016, she has directed the American Economic Association's Summer Program for underrepresented minority students.

Philip Jefferson (born 1961) earned a BA in economics from Vassar College and an MA and Ph.D. in economics from the University of Virginia. Jefferson has served as chair of the Department of Economics at Swarthmore College, president of the National Economic Association, Vassar College Board of Trustees, at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, and Vice Chair of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors.

Ebonya Washington, a graduate of Brown University, earned her Ph.D. in economics from MIT and is a professor at Columbia University whose research has pioneered methods for measuring discrimination. Her research focuses on the political economy of low-income and minority constituents and the processes through which low-income Americans meet their financial needs. She was formerly Professor of Economics at Yale University. Washington has written and lectured extensively about the difficulties for African Americans in the economics profession. In the media, Washington is quoted for her research on presidents and election trends.

Duke University professor, **Dr. William A. Darity, Jr.**, is the leading expert on racial inequality and reparations and is the founder of stratification economics, which examines how social hierarchies influence economic outcomes. Darity's research focuses on inequality by race, class, and ethnicity, and the racial achievement gap. His extensive economic work applies knowledge to public policy and has made him one of the most influential economists working on issues of race and economics in America today. He has written extensively on racial inequality and is a prominent voice in economic policy discussions. His most recent book, coauthored with A. Kirsten Mullen is "From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the 21st Century."

Black economists have made and continue to make significant contributions to the field of economics and public policy in America. Reports from the Federal Reserve Board, Urban Institute/Brookings (2024), the National Bureau of Economic Research (2022), and Pew Research (2023) underscore systemic economic barriers and the stark wealth disparity between Black and White Americans. Redlining, the systemic and discriminatory practice by which financial services – mortgages and insurance – are denied or limited to residents of specific neighborhoods based on race or ethnicity rather than individual creditworthiness, is widely cited as a primary driver of the current wealth gap. Although outlawed by the Fair Housing Act of 1968, its effects persist through credit access, where residents in predominantly white neighborhoods are significantly more likely to receive credit cards and favorable mortgage terms than those in predominantly Black neighborhoods.

Lisa Cook, the first Black woman on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors, commonly known as the Federal Reserve Board, and the main governing body of the Federal Reserve System of the United States of America. It oversees the Federal Reserve Banks and the implementation of the United States' monetary policy.

William A. Darity, Jr., Duke University professor and the leading expert on racial inequality and reparations.

Black Innovators – Contributions and Lost Potential

BY SUSAN GOEKLER

Investigating the historical contributions of Black inventors, mathematicians, and scientists inspired both admiration and anger. The Eurocentric culture dismissed people of African descent as inferior, denying them opportunities to learn or to gain the resources necessary to investigate their ideas. Yet, some prevailed.

Benjamin Banneker grew up in Baltimore County as a free Black person. Having seen only two timepieces in his lifetime -- a sundial and a pocket watch-- at the age of 22, Banneker constructed a striking clock out of wood, based on his own drawings and calculations. The clock continued to run until it was destroyed in a fire forty years later. Using borrowed tools and books, Banneker nearly accurately predicted the timing of a solar eclipse and later published several almanacs. Banneker assisted Major Andrew Ellicott in surveying what would become Washington, DC. Like many other Black people who prevailed against odds, Banneker challenged those in authority who denied full humanity to people because of their skin color. A notice in the Georgetown Weekly said Ellicott was "attended by Benjamin Banneker, an Ethiopian, whose abilities, as a surveyor and an astronomer, clearly prove that Mr. Jefferson's concluding that the race of men were void of mental endowments, was without foundation."

Before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that, because enslaved people were property, they could not own property, including patents, two Black men obtained patents in their names. **Thomas L. Jennings** was the first Black man to receive a patent, awarded on March 3, 1821 (US Patent 3306x) for his discovery of a process called dry-scouring, which was the forerunner of today's modern dry-cleaning. Born free in New York City, Jennings became a tailor and later opened a dry-cleaning business there. While running his business, Jennings developed dry-scouring. Jennings was a passionate abolitionist who used the income from his invention to free the rest of his family from slavery and fund abolitionist causes.

A successful farmer, **Henry Blair**, received his first patent for a corn planter that resembled a wheelbarrow, with a compartment to hold the seeds and rakes dragging behind to cover them. This device enabled farmers to plant their crops more efficiently and enabled a greater total yield. Blair signed the patent with an "X," indicating that he was illiterate. His second patent was for a cotton planter that split the ground with two shovel-like blades pulled by a horse or other draft animal. A wheel-driven cylinder behind the blades deposited seeds into the freshly plowed ground. The design helped to promote weed control while distributing seeds quickly and evenly.

After the Supreme Court ruling, the innovations of enslaved Black people were sometimes attributed to their owners, which is probably the case with the cotton gin attributed to Eli Whitney, but whose actual inventor remains unnamed. Other times, the owner claimed credit, but the enslaved person's identity is known. Such was the case of **Benjamin Montgomery**, who invented a steamboat propeller that used canoe paddling techniques, enabling steamboats to navigate the shallow, dangerous waters around many

plantations. His owner, Jefferson Damis, the future president of the Confederacy, sought a patent for the propeller, but the Supreme Court denied his petition, ruling that the inventions of enslaved people could not be patented. Although Montgomery obtained his freedom after the Civil War, he did not get credit for his work until after his death.

Another inventor denied a patent was **Benjamin Bradley**, who developed the first working model of a steam engine for a warship, constructed out of two pieces of steel, a gun barrel, and pewter. Impressed by this feat, his owner arranged for Bradley to work at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, making him the first African American to hold a non-menial post at the academy. Eventually, Bradley built the first engine capable of propelling a warship. Although he could not patent the engine. Bradley sold this engine and earned enough money to purchase his freedom.

Although a free Black man living in New England, **Lewis Temple** did not seek a patent for the innovative fluted or barbed harpoon he invented that revolutionized the whaling industry. Unlike the harpoons sailors had used for millennia, Temple's toggle iron, a two-piece harpoon, penetrated the whale's body and pivoted, making it all but impossible for a whale to break free. His toggle iron soon became the harpoon of choice and remained in use until the 1950s. Temple was active in the anti-slavery movement, becoming vice president of the New Bedford Union Society, and was arrested for "rioting" at a pro-slavery lecture. He assisted former slaves,

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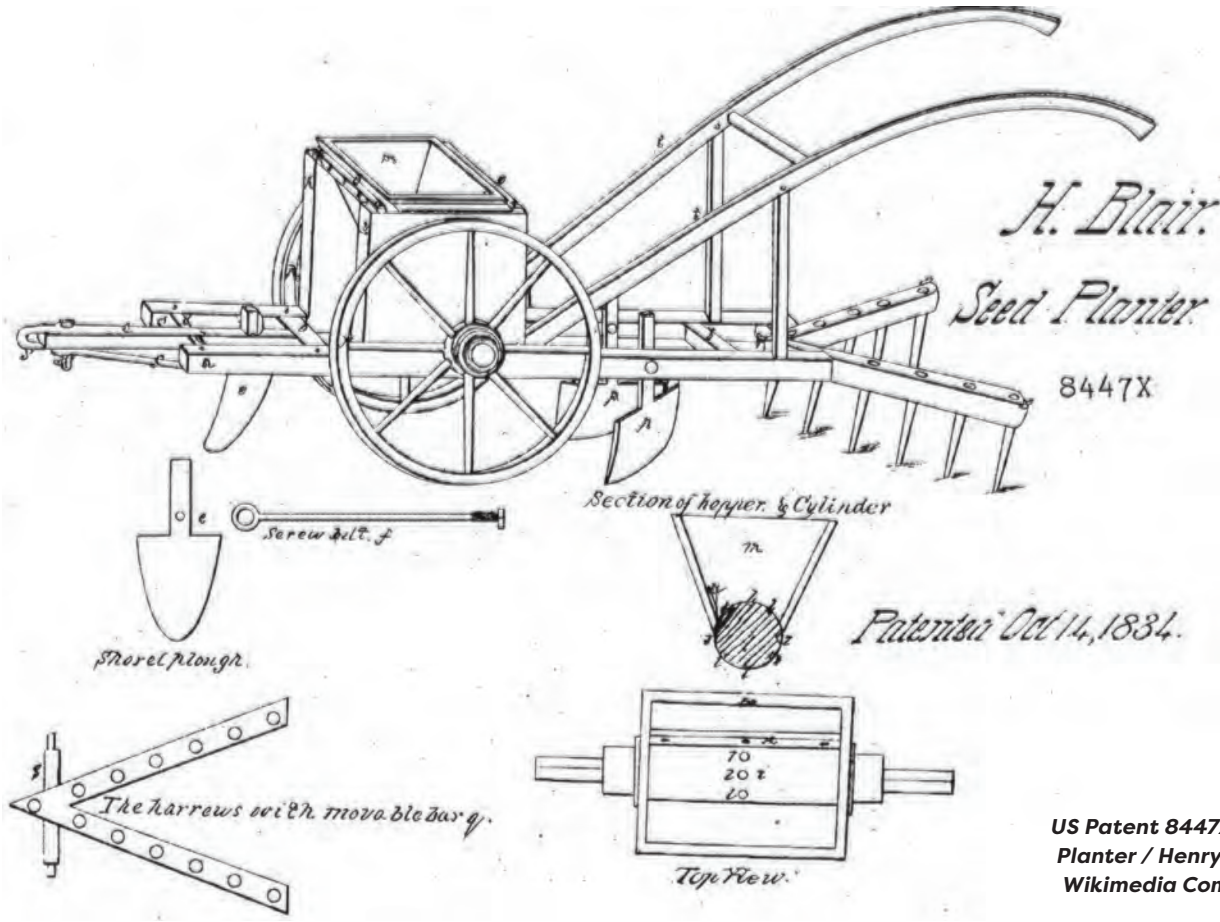

US Patent 8447X, Seed Planter / Henry Blair / Wikimedia Commons

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probably including young Frederick Douglass.

After emancipation, Black innovators continued to struggle with limited educational and employment opportunities. Many found teaching to be the only career option in which they could use a little of their knowledge. After earning a graduate degree in agricultural sciences, **Booker T. Washington** spent his career teaching and doing research at Tuskegee Institute. Because his research focused on agriculture, a trade considered appropriate for Black people, Tuskegee provided the resources needed for his research work on improving agricultural production and inventing new uses for crops such as peanuts.

Edward Alexander Bouchet was the first Black person to be nominated to Phi Beta Kappa. Just two years after completing undergraduate studies, Bouchet became the first Black person to earn a PhD in physics. Unable to get a job elsewhere, Bouchet taught at the Institute for Colored Youth, heading the school's new science program. In addition to physics and chemistry, Bouchet taught classes in astronomy, physical geography, and physiology. Bouchet taught at the ICY for 26 years until the school's managers decided to drop academic subjects and shift its focus to industrial education. Bouchet lost even that job.

Becoming the first Black person in the world to obtain a doctorate in mathematics required **Elbert Cox** to leave the U.S. and attend the Imperial University in Sandai, Japan. In 1925, only 28 people worldwide received doctorates in mathematics, including Cox. Despite his stellar credentials, the only job he could get was teaching at West Virginia State College, a poorly funded college for Black students. Later, he taught at Howard University. Never receiving support to continue his research, Cox excelled at teaching, including training engineers for the army during World War II. His work paved the way for Dudley Woodard to become the first Black person to receive a doctorate in mathematics from an American university.

After obtaining his PHD in mathematics, studying curves and topology, Dudley Woodard returned to Howard University, where he established a Master of Science program in mathematics. He published two papers considered the first mathematics papers by a Black person in top-class mathematics journals.

Charles Henry Turner also combined teaching with research. After earning a PhD in Zoology, Turner found the only job he could get was a teaching position in a high school for Black students, where he stayed until his retirement in 1922. While there, he conducted dozens of experiments in animal behavior and entomology, making important contributions that anticipated modern visions and concepts to varying extents. He published 71 papers and made fundamental discoveries on animal behavior, addressing topics such as comparative neuroanatomy in both vertebrates and invertebrates, arthropod taxonomy, insect behavior and navigation, insect learning, spider behavior, audition in moths, leaf morphology in grapevines, and even civil rights.

Euphemia Haynes, the first Black woman to earn a PhD in mathematics, focused her research on educational testing. She taught mathematics at several DC public high schools and at Miner Teaching College. Her research led her to advocate for desegregating DC Public Schools and ending the system that placed Black students on either an academic or vocational track. She later became a member of the DC school board, where she questioned the validity of IQ tests and whether they measured cause or effect.

A few Black American innovators had military connections that provided access to equipment and resources, contributing to their success. After serving in the Union Navy during the Civil War, **Lewis Latimer** leveraged his self-taught drafting skills to get a draftsman's job at a patent law firm in Boston. There, he worked on the development of the telephone alongside Alexander Graham Bell. Latimer helped develop a more efficient transmitter that improved

sound quality, and his drawings were crucial to securing the telephone patent. Latimer also worked with Edison on the incandescent light bulb and with Hiram S. Maxim on improving the production of carbon filament. He obtained a patent for a method to manufacture carbon filaments, making lightbulbs mass-producible. In addition to helping others, Latimer designed his own inventions, including an early air conditioning unit and an improved railroad car bathroom. He obtained patents for seven of his own inventions.

Working as a laboratory assistant for the Majestic Radio and TV Corporation, **Otis Boykin** researched resistors – a technology that reduces the flow of electricity, ensuring the safe operation of an electronic device. He obtained his first patent for a wire precision resistor and a second for a resistor that could withstand extreme temperature and pressure changes. The U.S. military, IBM, and other high-tech organizations soon started using Boykin's electronic resistors. Today, his resistor technologies are still used in many products, ranging from common household goods and cell phones to complex military technology. Boykin also invented a control unit that made pacemakers more efficient, longer-lasting, and less expensive to manufacture. This helped make these essential devices more accessible, improving patient care and enabling the saving and prolonging of more lives worldwide.

Charles Drew invented a safe way to store, process, and transport blood plasma. His work not only saved lives during World War II but also revolutionized blood plasma storage through blood banking, a process that continues to save lives today. Drew's breakthroughs in blood preservation occurred during World War II, when Great Britain needed enormous amounts of blood and plasma to treat its wounded soldiers. Using the experimental blood bank they had just tested as a blueprint, Drew and a colleague, Scudder, spearheaded the "Blood for Britain" program to ship plasma overseas. Following the success of that program, Drew became both the first Black surgeon to serve as examiner on the American Board of Surgery and the first director of the American Red Cross' Blood Bank in New York. He created several mobile blood donation stations, which would later be known as bloodmobiles.

When the space race replaced world wars as a contest between superpowers, **Katherine Johnson** found an opportunity to apply her mathematical brilliance. Her calculations were crucial in sending humans into space and became the basis for the highly praised film "Hidden Figures". She conducted trajectory analysis for Alan Shepard's Freedom 7 mission. In 1960, she and engineer Ted Skopinski coauthored a report explaining the equations describing an orbital spaceflight and specifying the spacecraft's landing position. She thus became the first woman in the Flight Research Division to receive credit as an author of a research report. When asked to name her greatest contribution to space exploration, Johnson named her calculations for synchronizing Project Apollo's Lunar Module with the lunar-orbiting Command and Service Module.

Annie Easley also began her career as a "human computer." Her earliest work involved running simulations for the planned Plum Brook Reactor Facility. When machines replaced human computers, Easley became an adept computer programmer, using languages such as Fortran and SOAP to support several NASA programs. She developed and implemented code used to analyze alternative power technologies, including the batteries used in early hybrid vehicles and in the Centaur upper-stage rocket.

This article mentions only a few Black innovators whose work and insights continue to impact people's lives. In doing this research, I kept imagining what other breakthroughs we might have benefited from if society had acknowledged the full humanity of Black people and provided them the education and research support accorded to White men of European descent.

The Impact of the Black Church

BY REVEREND DANIA GRIFFIN

Where would the black community be without the Black Church? Where would America be without the Black Church? Where would I be without the Black Church?

It is Church!

First, let me state the obvious. The Black Church is church. Wonderful worship in its myriad forms happens there. Prophetic preaching happens there. Soul-saving happens there. Effectual and fervent prayer happens there. Bible study happens there. Weddings, funerals, and family gatherings happen there. By every metric, whether it's congregational or connectional, the Black Church is church.

But from its beginnings, the Black Church has been so much more. Since its early form before the Revolutionary War, it has nurtured, guided, and guarded African American culture even as it has evolved. It has contributed to the unity of the African American community over and against the context of a larger community that seemed and, in fact, was demonstrably intent on creating disunity in the community.

Perhaps more than any other institution, the Black Church has been the heartbeat of the black community. It is the cultural center tasked with defining, refining, and redefining many of the mores, folkways, and beliefs, as well as their relevance in the moment for the black community. In the Black Church, the uniquely gifted were sought out and pushed to maximize their potential to benefit the black community and all communities.

The Black Church is so much more than a worship center.

The Early Church

Since its inception, the Black Church has been a place of refuge and healing for the oppressed and marginalized. According to Lincoln & Mamiya, "The Black Church is the cultural womb of the black community. Not only did it give birth to new institutions, such as schools, banks, insurance companies, and low-income housing, but it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities... It nurtured young talent for musical, dramatic, and artistic development....[This was] in addition to the traditional concerns of worship, moral nurture, education, and social control."

In the North

After the American Revolutionary War, as the northern states began to abolish slavery, African Americans formed mutual aid and self-help organizations. The Free African Society was one such organization. On April 12, 1787, Richard Allen, a Methodist, and Absalom Jones, an Episcopalian—both ministers and both of whom were born into slavery but purchased their freedom—and other black community leaders in Philadelphia, PA, formed the Society.

Its main purpose was to provide aid to newly freed blacks and to develop leaders. It also promoted religion and literacy. Additionally, the Society assisted with the cost of members' burials, provided financial aid for widows, found apprenticeships for children, paid tuition for members' children's education, and provided financial and other assistance during periods of unemployment or sickness.

During the yellow fever epidemic of 1793, members of the Free African Society served all the citizens of Philadelphia by nursing the sick, transporting and burying the dead, and relocating the ill to preselected quarantine locations.

In the South

In the southern states, many white enslavers feared that the enslaved, if allowed to worship independently, would plot rebellion. Consequently, they insisted that the enslaved attend white-controlled churches with them. There, the worship was rigid and staid, and the messages to the slaves were usually filled with heavy doses of strict obedience and subservience. Or they would invite preachers to preach similarly themed sermons to the enslaved on the plantation.

Beginning in the 1770's the enslaved began to convert to the Baptist and Methodist faiths. They responded to the message that "all Christians were equal in the sight of God." Also, the evangelistic style of worship—lively singing, etc.—was more similar and more readily adaptable to African worship patterns. They could easily mix African rhythms, singing, and beliefs with Christian motifs.

After attending the required services, the enslaved would gather in a remote place on or near the plantation and have service. Historians refer to it as the "invisible church" or "invisible institution." They would call worshipers to "hush harbors" —so called because, to avoid being discovered, the attendees would sing and testify and praise God in hushed voices. Sometimes they would hang blankets or other materials to mute their voices. But even muted praise—when genuine—is powerful, effective, and, most importantly, unifying.

It was in those meetings that they would connect with others from other plantations. It was in those meetings that the commonalities of their situation overcame the differences of tribe, language, regional origin, and previous religious beliefs. It was there that families could reconnect and that new relationships were formed. It was there that the collective desire for freedom found its fullest expression.

It is said that theology is done through the prism of the one doing the theology. It was there that a new theology evolved. The biblical message was infused with the people's experiences and hopes, and a new interpretation of biblical

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themes emerged. David vs. Goliath, Daniel in the Lion's Den, and many other stories gave enslaved worshipers new hope. The Gospel message was filled with a new, liberating power that was available to every believer.

Deliverance did not have to wait for the bye-and-bye and afterwhile. It was also a "right now" ambition. New life was not just a future, heavenly goal. Believers could demand new life right here and right now. The same God that delivered God's people from the Egyptian Pharaoh could and would deliver the enslaved from the American Pharaoh, the enslaver. If the children of Jacob could endure a long night of 400 years of captivity, then the children of God, the believers in Christ, knowing that "...joy comes in the morning...," could do the same.

It was in those meetings that they agreed that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was a God of Justice, Mercy, Freedom, Equality, and Righteousness. And through Christ, that same God was their God. It was in those meetings that worshipers began to recognize their ability not only to affirm common afflictions, needs, and desires but also to address them.

They, too, possessed the Divine Spirit. They, too, were equipped to fight the good fight. Most importantly, they would ultimately be victorious as well.

"Freedom"

According to Lincoln and Mamiya, a significant aspect of black Christian belief is in the symbolic importance of the word "freedom." Throughout the African experience in North America, "freedom" was to be understood in the context of its time. "During slavery, it meant release from bondage. After emancipation, it meant the right to be educated, to be employed, and to move freely from place to place. In the 20th century, it meant social, political, and economic justice.

However, in every context, "freedom" has always meant "the absence of any restraint which might compromise one's responsibility to God.... The notion has persisted that if God calls you to discipleship, God calls you to freedom."

The Black Church embodies this understanding of "freedom." It is not freedom to not do. Quite the contrary, it is freedom to do!

It is freedom to trust God. Freedom to serve God. Freedom to help, to hope, and to believe. Freedom to hold out and to hold on. Freedom to wait. Freedom to pray for those who persecute us. Freedom to simultaneously be content and to strive for better in every circumstance. Freedom to love their enemy. Freedom to believe and trust in God. And freedom to desire to improve not only their circumstances but also those of others. That's freedom. The Black Church became not just a worship center. It became the Church of "freedom."

It was in this spirit of "freedom" that, after the dissolution of the Free African Society in 1794, more than 100 new African American mutual aid societies had been established in Philadelphia by 1838. That's freedom.

From the 1830s to the 1890s, the Black Convention movement grew. These conventions were part of a broader political environment of mass meetings through which Black popular politics could operate in 19th-century America. The Black church often provided the necessary space to conduct the convention. That's freedom.

The early meetings focused on the abolition of slavery. But the conventions understood that—once freed—negotiating a world without slavery was a different matter. Other concerns were equal educational opportunities and land reform. During Reconstruction, their focus expanded to equal political and civil rights, self-help, and racial solidarity through education and economic advancement. The Black Church was integral to the existence and progress of these conventions. That's freedom.

The Twentieth Century Church

That spirit of freedom extended well into the twentieth century with the Black Church's pivotal involvement in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s-1970s. The Black Church was both a

spiritual center and an operational base for marches, boycotts, and protests that directly confronted the oppressive system of Jim Crow laws, racial discrimination, and inequity.

The Black Church represented moral, political, and social authority. It provided resources—including and especially, physical space—that were critical to the movement's success. Its contributions included incubating leadership, modeling nonviolence, and organizing critical civil rights efforts that redefined American society. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Ralph Abernathy, James Lawson, Bayard Rustin, and so many others drew inspiration from the Black Church for ideas, resources, and networks.

It was in Black churches that the Montgomery Bus Boycott was organized. It was in Black churches that the march from Selma to Montgomery was coordinated. Some churches that were pivotal to the Movement include the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL, the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church in Montgomery, AL, the Shiloh Baptist Church in Albany, GA, the Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, SC, and the Bethel Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. says that religion enabled our ancestors and their descendants "...to learn, to grow, to develop, to interpret and reinvent the world in which they were trapped; it enabled them to bide their time...time for them to fight for their freedom, and [time] for us to continue the fight for ours." I would replace "religion" with "the Black Church."

In conclusion

In closing, I need to answer the three questions that I posed earlier. First, without the Black Church, the black community would be little more than a reflection of the deleterious socio-eco-politico-supremacist image projected upon it by those anxious to purge their own conscience of all guilt and wrongdoing. It would have no knowledge of its history. It would not know how fearfully and wonderfully God made it. And, it would have no knowledge of the grace that God has shown it or the greatness that God has sown into its very essence. The black community would be the shadow.

To the second question, America would be lesser. Deprived of the gifts and graces, the genius and prowess, the insight and intellect, the resilience and strength that have been intrinsic to every aspect of American culture—all of which have been honed in the Black Church—and bereft of the reflective witness by which the Black Church mirrored America back to itself which has led to a degree of self-reflection, self-awareness and growth, America would be lesser.

To the third and final question, I would be lost. My potential would be even less fully realized. I would never know that I could be more than my circumstances. I would never have known that forgiveness, both by God and by humankind, is real. Most critically, I would never know the power of genuine Love. Love from family. Love from friends. Love from strangers. Love from Church members and from Christians everywhere. Also, I would not have known that giving back Love is equally important, if not more important, than being Loved. I would not know the joy of Loving all those persons from whom I have received Love. And I would be lost.

The impact of the Black Church on me, on the black community, and on the nation is immeasurable. Against unimaginable odds, despite the most extreme, hostile, and horrific conditions, the Black Church still stands as an emblem of the indomitability of a people, the faithfulness of God, and the continued hope in the promises yet to be fulfilled.

As the spiritual says,

We've come this far by faith

Leaning on the Lord.

Trusting in His holy Word

He never failed me yet.

Oh, Oh, Oh, can't turn around

He's never failed me yet.

The Cultural Influence of African American Music in America

BY TRACEY JARMON

That Bass

American music is a mosaic of sounds and rhythms rooted in churches, juke joints, fields, and city streets. It pulses with the history of oppression and hardship. When dignity was stripped away and survival was criminalized, music became the last sanctuary for freedom. Every American genre—jazz, blues, gospel, country, rock and roll—is born from the voices of the oppressed. These genres were frequently repackaged for white audiences and industry profits. This story is not just about music; it is the contrast between creator and beneficiary. It reminds me of a familiar saying in the Black community, "They want our rhythm but not our blues."

The Blues

Before discussing the impact of other genres, it's important to recognize the foundational role of the Blues. Blues is the mother tongue of American music. Emerging in the late 19th century in the Deep South, it echoed spirituals and work songs that eased the monotony of grueling field labor. Emancipated Southerners lived in a fragile space between newfound freedom and the terror of lynching, beatings, and relentless opposition. Poverty, racism, and survival shaped daily existence. The Blues captured those realities.

W.C. Handy, often called the "Father of the Blues," helped to crystallize the genre. Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Charley Patton, and Robert Johnson shaped the emotional landscape of stories of love, betrayal, and survival. During the Great Migration (the time between 1910 and 1970 when Black people migrated North to escape Jim Crow and segregation), Blues traveled North, creating a buzz that the music industry was eager to profit from. White labels recorded these songs, stripped them of the context, and marketed them for commercial success. The financial gains were rarely awarded to the Black creators who often died in poverty. This formula still stands today.

Jazz

Jazz defied the rules. American classical music is a collective ensemble operating in soloist form. Jazz was considered immoral and crude because it improvised, played with timing, and embraced individuality and improvisation. It reflected the

movement and adaptability of a growing Black consciousness. There was freedom in jazz that was considered threatening. It was considered dangerous or radically chic to cross those lines.

Once jazz crossed over (embraced as “classical music” by white intermediaries), the pioneers like Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane were welcomed into the rooms. They ushered jazz into modernism, abstraction, and spiritual exploration. Following this acceptance, white jazz bands attained gigs in top-tier venues that Black bands could not. And when Black bands did play in those establishments, they performed in front of all White audiences, had to enter through the back door, and couldn’t use the restrooms. Radio popularized Black musicians' music, which white bands covered. Critics of the time propped up white artists as intellectual and criticized Black artists as instinctual. Today, jazz is celebrated, but only after it was filtered through whiteness.

Country

Most people equate Country music with the white rural South. This is a misleading concept. The banjo is the foundation of early country music. The banjo, drums, flutes, and rattles originated in West Africa and were recreated in America using local materials. Enslaved banjo players, fiddlers, guitarists, and harmonica (horn) players entertained during community gatherings long before Country was considered a white genre of music.

One of the Grand Ole Opry's founding performers was a Black man named DeFord Bailey. He was a harmonica virtuoso who was eventually pushed out due to racism. The Carter Family (Considered the first family of country, bluegrass, and folk music) was tutored by and heavily influenced by DeFord Bailey. Bailey was a Black man who contributed to the family's success but received little recognition. Arnold Schultz, a Kentucky guitarist, influenced white players such as Merle Travis, Ike Everly, and Kennedy Jones. Bill Monroe (The Father of Bluegrass), who was mentored by Schultz, admittedly adopted his runs and thumb-picking techniques, which shaped the sound of modern country music and the future of rock ‘n' roll.

As the genre matured, Black country music was labeled “race music”. The music was similar in sound but divided by color. Black country musicians did not see the exposure or commercial success of their White counterparts. Except for Henry Glover, Charlie Pride, and Linda Martell, Black country musicians were shut out. In a segregated America, one becomes the money-making standard and the other, taboo. Today, we can count on our hands the Black Country artists who have received acclaim.

Rock and Roll

Rock and roll existed before The Ed Sullivan Show in 1956, featuring Elvis Presley.

Sister Rossetta Sharpe combined gospel and electric guitar years before rock had a name. She, along with Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and Bo Diddley, built the foundation.

Rosetta Sharpe was the first artist to record using heavy distortion on her electric guitar. She combined gospel and electric guitar accompaniment, ushering it out of churches into concert venues. She is credited with a heavy influence on British Blues. Her tour with Blues Legend Muddy Waters in 1964 has been cited by artists such as Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, and Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones. She was aptly named “The Original Soul Sister.”

Little Richard’s music combined rock and roll, pop, and funk. His influences inspired The Beatles, Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Elton John, Jimi Hendrix, and many others. Many of whom have directly spoken about his impact. He is known as “The Architect of Rock and Roll” and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in its first class.

Rock and roll, like most genres, began in Black spaces and was dismissed as "devil music." As it gained popularity among white audiences, it became accepted. White artists were elevated to fame while Black pioneers faded into obscurity, best exemplified by the rise of Elvis Presley.

Today, Elvis is known as “The King of Rock and Roll but Elvis didn’t agree. In a 1992 interview with Tom Jones, Elvis stated that Fats Domino and Chuck Berry were the originators of Rock and Roll. He said that Chuck Berry should have that title.

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Rhythm and Blues

R&B was not created from a single source. It was a combination of Blues and Jazz. Early pioneers of the sound included Louis Jordan, Ruth Brown, Fats Domino, and Ray Charles. The term R&B replaced "Race Music" on the charts. Its definition remained the same. R&B music describes music marketed to Black audiences.

The term "Blue Eyed Soul" was coined in the 1960s. It's defined as R&B music performed by White artists. The Righteous Brothers, Hall & Oats, and Simply Red are artists who have successfully blended pop with soulful sounds.

Rap Music

In the early 1970s, rap music began in the South Bronx, New York. It grew in popularity because of its infectious beats and relatable lyrics. DJ Kool Herc isolated instrumental breaks from funk and soul records that led to talking and rhyming over the tracks. It has become a cultural phenomenon that influences other areas of culture, including music, fashion, politics, and social consciousness.

Much like its Blues grandfather, rap echoed the voices of the oppressed and disenfranchised. And, just like the Blues, Rap was created in the community as a form of relief from daily struggles. Some of the pioneers of early rap were The Sugarhill Gang, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, and Kurtis Blow. As it evolved, the message became empowerment. Public Enemy, Boogie Down Productions (led by KRS-1), De La Soul, A Tribe Called Quest, Brand Nubians, The X Klan, and Poor Righteous Teachers, advanced a narrative of Black Pride and untold history reminiscent of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. This form of Rap was essentially replaced with Gangsta Rap. Gangsta Rap started on the West Coast. Initially, West Coast Rap discussed a similar struggle. It didn't glorify violence as a way of life, but rather addressed living conditions faced in neighborhoods of color. Gangsta Rap was born, and we haven't looked back.

Today's Rap glorifies violence, flaunts materialism, demeans women, and suppresses class awareness. This is intentional. Record companies, owned by White men, exploit the genre. Financial control dictates what is promoted and to whom. Rappers not conforming to negative stereotypes receive less recognition than those who demean themselves and their communities. Though most Rap artists are Black, 70% of consumers are White. If their exposure is limited to Rap, stereotypes and negative perceptions thrive.

The skewed telling of music's origin has had a monumental financial impact. Unpaid royalties, stolen songs, and rights to masters have enriched record companies and starved artists of their own creations. When Black children do not see the genius of their ancestors, they believe the brilliance doesn't belong to them.

African American music is the foundation of all music. Without it, the world would be silent.

Boots on the Ground

Shine A Light on Em

Must Be the Music

Artwork by Tracey Jarmon

Black History Under Fire: The Battles for the Truth in America's Classroom

BY TRACEY JARMON

America has long struggled with the truth. Whether discussing the cause of the civil war or the origin of all humans, there is a shroud of doubt that blurs the facts. This barrier is not a flimsy obstacle that can be easily removed; it is a solid blockade, deliberately constructed to stop the flow of progress. Outside our homes, classrooms are the first place for truth. If that truth is distorted, the blocked path will eventually lead to consequences that overflow and affect everyone.

Why Truth Matters in School

I was uneasy in 8th-grade history during lessons on slavery. According to the textbook, my family's story began with slavery—period. Critics argue that American History starts there because America starts there. I'd agree if all groups' contributions were ignored. I'd agree if ancient civilizations' true identities were accurately represented. I'd agree if proper credit were consistently given. But I do not agree. This teaching method directly impacts those taught.

When Black students learn only about suffering and enslavement, they may internalize racism and develop negative self-images. Our ancestors were not born slaves; they were people who were enslaved. African kingdoms and dynasties existed centuries before Europe. Scientific innovations and advanced maps from these civilizations endure. Art, tools, discoveries, and mathematics from Africa fill the collections of global museums—evidence of achievements predating those of Europe and America. Teaching this helps Black children build pride and purpose grounded in fact.

When White students are taught that Black people began as property, they may feel undeserved superiority. (My son returned from school and reported that a white peer called him a boy. I told him both were boys. He went on, "he called me a boy and said, I don't deserve a name because I was a slave.") Such superiority breeds entitlement, erodes empathy, and stifles learning. Learning about Black triumphs and achievements builds respect. Understanding African American history fosters empathy.

It Starts at Home

Black parents have an obligation to foster pride in their children's Blackness. (I opened my son's history book and saw slave images from the Middle Passage; the illustration showed a slave on the deck, looking a little sad. I searched the book for a realistic depiction of the Middle Passage, but found none. I immediately googled the topic and showed my son three accurate visuals and firsthand accounts.)

White parents must also avoid perpetuating falsehoods and actively fight against them. It's not enough to passively not be racist. It's an active stance against misinformation, confronting it in your own community and among your families.

Ideally, this would occur naturally. In reality, we rely on schools to fill gaps. These policies now face attack. Efforts aim to erase history further, replacing truth and fact with distortion. The Encyclopedia Britannica or biased textbooks no longer bind us. A lack of information in schools is no longer an excuse for ignorance. Modern technology makes information accessible. We must guide children to compare texts with their lived realities. This builds critical thinking and challenges stereotypes.

The Past and the Future Collide

After the Civil War, the South sought to recast the origins of the war. The revised claim became that the conflict was about pride and states' rights, sidestepping the central truth: the right to own other humans. Organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) led these efforts, lobbying for pro-Confederate textbooks, distributing approved reading lists, pressuring school boards, and funding scholarships for those supporting their narrative.

The Trump administration introduced comparable policies. Several executive actions and

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public statements changed the federal approach to history and civics education, promoting "patriotic education" in response to contemporary movements. Once again, organizations aligned with those views receive support, while others are penalized. Groups like Moms for Liberty, a conservative advocacy group founded in 2021, have actively tried to shape school curricula. Their positions on "divisive concepts" have heavily impacted how race and marginalized groups are discussed. In states with new restrictions, teachers often shorten lessons or avoid topics entirely. For instance, a Texas teacher shared with The Texas Tribune that under HB 3979, even referencing racism or civic engagement carries risk now. Many educators worry that teaching honest American history could prompt complaints or punishment.

Ignorance is Easy to Control

The assault on education is deliberate; cultivating ignorance is strategic. A poorly informed public is easier to control. The current administration is buoyed by Trump's supporters, the poorly educated. After winning Nevada on February 23, 2016, Trump declared, "I love the poorly educated." Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that more educated states vote Blue and less educated states vote Red. 14 of the 15 highest-earning states voted Blue. In comparison, the 10 poorest states in America voted Red. This administration knows propaganda works on people who don't check facts and acts to limit access to education.

"If the nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be." — Thomas Jefferson.

Miseducation harms everyone. An informed society makes wiser choices. Truth, however uncomfortable, is a blueprint to prevent past mistakes. Without honest teaching of slavery's brutality, the struggle for justice, and Africa's global contributions, it's easy to accept propagandist stereotypes. Banning African American authors whose works contradict sanitized history amplifies those wishing to obscure the past and fuels supremacist beliefs. Keeping people ignorant of real history breeds fear of words like woke, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and Critical Race Theory. A nation that refuses to confront history never matures; historical ignorance sustains inequality. White comfort is so prioritized that laws and policies cater to it.

I Have More than a Dream

This Black History Month will overflow with MLK references. Some speakers will sincerely offer nuanced, substantive perspectives on ongoing racial issues, historical narratives, and solutions. Others will misappropriate his words for their own narratives. The "I Have a Dream" speech is popular but is often stripped of context and reduced to a harmless soundbite. Dr. King's more radical writings and speeches are frequently omitted.

In his book "Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community", he wrote, 'Whites, it must frankly be said, are not putting in a similar mass effort to reeducate themselves out of their racial ignorance. It is an aspect of their sense of superiority that the white people of America believe they have so little to learn.' Dr. King knew that education for everyone is essential for progress. To counter misleading stories, we must continue to educate ourselves and support accurate teaching in classrooms.

Teaching accurate history in America's classrooms is an act of reclamation. We will not allow the truth to be distorted, dismissed, or silenced. African American History is American history. America was shaped by stolen land, forced labor, and systemic injustice. The sooner we acknowledge the country's flaws, the stronger our democracy will be. The Civil Rights Movement did not wait for laws and policies to catch up. The Movement forced change by shaking foundations, and we will continue to do the same.

Tracey Jarmon

Jarmon is a resident of Maplewood, NJ and owner of Modernskyartandsound.com. She is a mixed media artist, vocalist, writer, and mother. With an innate ability to channel raw feelings into art, her works are visionary designs that speak directly to the soul of the observer. Each creation is a testament to the artist's authenticity, capturing the essence of the Black experience with a rare, unfiltered beauty.

African and African American Art

African and African American Art: From Africa to America and the World

DR. MARLENE A. SAUNDERS, MANAGING EDITOR, LET THE TRUTH BE TOLD

Of the 50 states in the U.S., Delaware is among only 13 that have legally mandated the instruction of Black history in grades K-12 in public schools. HB 198, passed in 2021, includes eight minimum content areas. One of these requires instruction on "...the history and culture of Black people prior to the African and Black Diaspora, including contributions to...art." The grassroots organizations, parents, students, and civic organizations that tirelessly pressed the Delaware General Assembly to pass this legislation should be applauded. Their work ensures that students receive Black history instruction that goes beyond symbolic gestures and addresses the long-term absence of substantial African and African American history in public school curricula.

Nevertheless, this article is intended to support Delaware's public schools' efforts. It does not minimize the history of African art and African American art as influential expressions of culture in Africa, the U.S., Delaware, and the world. HB 198 placed many teachers in unknown terrain. That terrain will require years to traverse properly. In fact, former Delaware Secretary of Education Mark Holodick candidly admitted, "Many educators are not prepared to deliver what is required from the law because they don't know the history and weren't taught it themselves." He continued, saying, "Teachers will be in a better spot in five to 10 years, after they have been taught how to teach the principles and the history while tying them to current events."

Holodick's assessment of teachers' capacity to teach Black history raises a significant question: How does this affect art history instruction on Africa and the diaspora in the U.S.? If teachers lack sufficient knowledge of Black history, can parents reasonably expect them to teach about Africa's rock art, the symbolism of African masks, and artists such as Henry O. Tanner, Edmonia Lewis, and Edmund Bannister, as well as poets, writers, and sculptors of the Black Arts Movement?

Further, if we believe that culture and art emerged in Africa, were brought to the U.S. by enslaved Africans, and then integrated into world art, this shows a common humanity. This strongly advocates for inclusive instruction on African and African American art.

A Hierarchy-Free Definition of Culture

Considering the above, what should children be taught about African art and artworks by African Americans? First and foremost, Delaware's future diversity-conscious citizens and democratic leaders should not be influenced to think of culture according to a hierarchy where, for example, Europe and Europeans are at the top as creators of culture, knowledge, science, etc., and Africa and its descendants are situated not only as inferior but also as incapable of producing any elements of culture. Instead, after recognizing the origins of humankind, teachers should provide students with a definition of culture like "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society."

Accordingly, students should be informed about anthropological and ethnographic studies that confirm "...the overwhelming preponderance of ancient hominid skulls and bones are unearthed in Africa." Furthermore, all the variations and diversifi-

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cations from the earliest of all to Homo sapiens arose in Africa."

Is it, then, reasonable to conclude that, as the cradle of humanity and the origins of human culture, including art, Africa would be the first to emerge? Of course, because "...from Homo erectus to Homo sapiens, the stirrings of culture developed in Africa. Toolmaking, the use of fire, social organization, and communication through art (italics added) and language emerged."

When teaching African art and art created by African Americans, what must teachers not overlook?

Despite recent scientific knowledge that discredits disparaging descriptions of Africa as devoid of history and, by implication, culture, historical racism prevails. This helps to explain the negative attitudes mainstream America has about Africa. For instance, a report titled "Stereotypes About Africa in Britain and the United States: A Social-Psychological Study of Their Impact on Engagement with Africa" found that "...everyday perceptions of Africa in the U.K. and the U.S. are still largely shaped by outdated and negative stereotypes – with profound consequence for how people engage with the continent culturally and economically" (Report reveals Western views of Africa are based on stereotypes of poverty, corruption and nature).

This report should concern teachers and parents because its findings indicate that historical and scientific racism continue to shape children's views of African art and the work of African American artists in American and global cultures. As a result, teachers and parents must work to prevent the resurgence of ideas, such as those expressed by German philosopher Hegel in the nineteenth century and Oxford Professor Trevor-Rogers in the 1960s, in the attitudes and behaviors of Delaware's future leaders. For example, Hegel wrote, "Africa is no historical part of the World, it has no movement or development to exhibit...What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit..."

In 1963, Trevor-Roper said, "Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present, there is none; only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness."

What are Examples of Suggested Content Pertaining to African Art and African American Art?

Students should be taught about the confluence of African art and the artworks of America's African American artists. Carter G. Woodson, the Father of Black History, noted "...extensive comment is not necessary to show the connection between African art and the achievements of American Negroes in this [art] sphere. Buildings, utensils, and ornaments made by Negro slaves in America during the early colonial period can still be pointed out in cities like Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans."

In addition, students should know that several African musical instruments were introduced to America by enslaved Africans. Examples include the banjo (mbanza in the Kimbundu speech ways of Central Africa; bangelo in Sierra Leone). Historical records show that by 1775, the xylophone (also known as balafons or balafos in Africa) was described in Virginia.

By the time students graduate from one of Delaware's public high schools, they should know that African artists developed diverse traditions of sculpture (figures and masks), architecture, furniture, pottery, textiles, and jewelry. African American students and their parents, especially, are reclaiming African culture through clothing, hairstyles, and household items. Because of this, exposing all students to these traditions is no longer difficult. Images of African hairstyles and African masks, as well as sites that provide information on African and African American art, are plentiful online.

Although significant to the history of African American art, the Harlem Renaissance should not be taught as the signature period for African American art.

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African Americans serving in the military

BY DANA E. PASKINS

Today, military members enjoy acceptance and respect that didn't always exist for the work performed by soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, members of the Coast Guard, and Merchant Marines. Military members follow orders given by those appointed over them, regardless of race, gender, religious denomination, or political party affiliation, and usually without question. However, military members of color have always had the threat of discrimination to deal with because the military is just a microcosm of American society as a whole. In 2026, we are still dealing with discrimination.

Since the founding of our nation, African Americans' military service to the country has been a significant and vital component of our history, even though many try hard to erase it. African Americans have participated in every war America fought from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terrorism. Documentation shows that in World War I, over 350,000 African Americans served in the American Expedition Forces. In World War II, more than 1,000,000 African Americans served in all branches of service, including the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

As we all know, we are now working through unprecedented times, but people of color continue to serve our country proudly, the United States of America. We always have and we always will!!

African Americans have endurance in our DNA. Our ancestors endured slavery, our veterans endured war, and now we endure the chaos going on in our country, but we remain hopeful. Vietnam Veterans endured extreme mistreatment when returning home from war, but they did their job, and we thank them for their service and sacrifice. Because of their sacrifices, we continue to serve with honor.

The Tuskegee Airmen were one of the most resilient groups in the military. They didn't have the best equipment, but they had the knowledge and training to rise to the occasion and perform above and beyond expectations. Their records are in the history books, and we know they flew over 15,000 combat missions in Europe and North Africa, earning numerous awards. They proved Black Americans' capabilities in combat roles, significantly influencing the integration of the armed forces in 1948.

Major Dana E. Paskins, USAF (Ret)

African Americans have persevered while serving in the military and just moving along in everyday life. We have stood the test of time and never tire of trying to do good. As of 2023, an article in Syracuse University Today reported that there were over 2.4 million African American veterans and 350,000 African Americans currently serving, all of whom contributed to the good of the country. And our very own Brigadier General Ernest Talbert, through dedica-

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tion and perseverance, became the Chief of Staff, Headquarters, Delaware Air National Guard (HQ DANG) in 2005 and was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. He became the highest-ranking African American in the Delaware National Guard's over 350-year history and the first African American General of the unit.

We had the shoulders of many to stand on when considering a military career. Those members had the faith, courage, and determination to continue moving forward in a system that tried to hold them back. We saw Maj Charity Adams, Commander, 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, become the first African-American woman to become an officer in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (later WACs).

We have witnessed Gen. Colin Powell hold the highest military position in the Department of Defense as the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and, after retirement, become the first African American to hold the office of the U.S. Secretary of State.

The accomplishments, sacrifices, and service of African Americans to our country have been many. As I reflect on Black History Month, I know that I was led to serve in the military because of people who looked like me and the many contributions they made to our country.

Having attended Tuskegee Institute (now University), landing on the air strip where the Tuskegee Airmen trained, and meeting a few of them in my career, I was destined to serve my country proudly in uniform for over 30 years!

We thank the men and women of color who have served proudly and look forward to our continued service to our country, the United States of America.

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Students should also be informed about early Black artists like Edmonia Lewis (1844-1907) and Edmund Bannister (1828-1901), who emerged before the Civil War, as well as H. O. Tanner, who was the first African American to achieve international recognition.

Influence of African Art Worldwide

Content on African art should provide students with evidence of the extent to which African art influenced the work of European artists. These include French, German, and Italian artists that include Cezanne, Picasso, and Soutine in painting; Lipchitz, Modigliani, Archipenko, Brancusi, Epstein, and Lembruch in sculpture.

Conclusion

HB 198 is an antidote to historical racism, which breeds ignorance. The Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) has devoted considerable time and effort to recommending Black history content to each of the state's school districts. This includes recommendations for essential Black history content developed by the University of Delaware's Africana Studies program. It should be noted that Delaware is a "local control state." This means each district has the constitutional right choose the content to be taught to students.

HB 198 does not exempt parents from working with teachers and school officials to ensure minimum content requirements are met. DDOE urges parents to visit the website listing each school district's Black history curriculum by grade (Black History Education (HB 198) – Delaware Department of Education). After reviewing, contact your district's HB 198 Lead for the district (Appendix B-LEA HB 198 Leadership 24-25-Google Docs.

Let's not forget the lesson Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. provided:

"Nothing in all the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity."

Let us commit to fostering knowledge and critical thinking in Delaware's future adult citizens and leaders.

Award Acceptance Speech:

Bishop Alfred Cannon was honored by the Sunshine Circle Club at their Annual Kwanzaa Event

Good afternoon family, elders, and community.

I stand before you today, deeply honored and truly humbled to be recognized under the principle of Imani-faith. Faith in ourselves. Faith in our people. Faith in our future. and faith in a God who has carried us through generations of struggle and triumph.

Imani is not blind belief; it is tested belief. It is faith that has survived chains, survived Jim Crow, survived redlining, mass incarceration, and systems designed to erase us. It is the kind of faith our ancestors had when they believed in freedom before freedom ever believed in them.

Our history is not just something we read in books-it is something we live. It's in our blood, our music, our churches, our families, and our resilience. And today, when there are efforts to silence our stories, remove our truth from classrooms, and pretend our pain never happened, Imani reminds us that our history does not disappear just because someone is uncomfortable with it.

Faith tells us that even if they try to take our history out of textbooks, they will never take it out of us.

Because we teach our children at home.

We pass down stories at the dinner table.

We honor our elders.

We show up for our communities.

And we refuse to forget who we are.

Imani also means believing in the next generation. Believing that our young people will rise informed, confident, and unapologetic about their Blackness. Believing that they will carry the torch further than we ever could. And believing that truth-real truth-will always find its way back into the light.

Faith has always been our weapon and our shield. When the world told us we were nothing, faith told us we were chosen. When systems tried to break us, faith reminded us that we come from survivors. And when progress feels threatened, faith tells us to stand firm-not in fear, but in purpose.

So today, I accept this honor not just for myself, but for every ancestor who believed without seeing. For every parent who prayed over their child. And for every community that continues to rise, no matter what is thrown our way.

As we move forward, let us hold onto Imani, not just a word, but as a way of life. Faith in God. Faith in each other. And faith that our story is far from over.

Thank you...Happy Kwanzaa

The Southern Delaware Alliance For Racial Justice

... Ending Racism And Its Corrosive Consequences

LET'S STOP RACISM FOR GOOD

IN SOUTHERN DELAWARE

JOIN SDARJ FOR LESS THAN 11¢ A DAY.

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- Monthly Town Hall Meetings
- Book and Film Discussion Groups
- Weekly News Digests
- Youth Academic Achievement Awards
- Ongoing Legislative Advocacy

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SDARJ is a non-partisan charitable 501(c)3 organization that educates, advocates and informs about racial justice, equality, and fair opportunity for all. Visit our website at sdarj.org , on Facebook @SDARJDE or email us at info@sdarj.org.