The Geography of Black History: African-American Cartographic Resources

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Africans
Exploring a New World
African Culture in America

THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURE:
Griots, Talking Drums, and Call and Response Singing

Although slavery did much to disconnect slaves from their African heritage, many African traditions not only survived but adapted and shaped American culture as well. Music is one such tradition. As Africans were taken from Senegambia, from the Slave Coast stretching from Sierra Leone to Cameroon, and finally from Congo-Angola, the musical traditions of each of these regions traveled with them.

THE GRIOTS: In Senegambia, singers and musicians belong to a social class known as griots. Griots often sing songs of praise about the rich and powerful in return for payment. Because those songs turn to insults if the griots are not paid, griots are both respected and feared. Griots also serve as musical historians by singing songs that tell the stories of their people. Some griots play in groups to provide accompaniment to farmers and other workers. Griots have often been compared to the songsters and blues musicians who traveled the Mississippi Delta in the first decades of the 20th century.

THE BANJO: Partly because there are few forests from which large drums can be made, Senegambian music emphasizes stringed instruments. Music historians trace the roots of the modern banjo to this region.

THE TALKING DRUM: The complex music of the Slave Coast region relies heavily on drums, rattles, bells, and other percussion instruments. Western jazz drumming has much in common with this sound. Among the most famous drums of West Africa is the “talking drum” used by Nigeria’s Yoruba people. The talking drum has strings that when squeezed vary the tension on the drumhead, thus altering the sound the drum produces. Drummers also use a curved drumstick and, by changing pitch and rhythm, can make the instrument “talk” in “language” based on spoken language.

The people of the Congo-Angola river basin are best known for complex singing, often containing whoops, shouts, and hollers. Some music historians have compared this style to that of Western artists such as James Brown.

CALL AND RESPONSE: Music has always been at the center of West African life. Religious rites, farming, building houses, and other activities all have their own songs, often performed by entire villages in a musical pattern known as “call and response.” A lead vocalist sings a line, then everyone else sings a response. Call and response singing has influenced American popular music, from gospel to rhythm and blues to hip-hop.

VOCAL MASKING: In village rituals, celebrants often wear masks to represent various gods or other figures. These masked figures would also “mask” their singing voices by drastically changing the pitch and tone of songs, using growls, shrieks, and other unusual effects. Some masks have layers of material in their mouthpieces, which change the singer’s voice even more. In America, vocal masking can be heard in many African-American church sermons, as well as in a wide range of popular music.
Colonial America and the American Revolution

Boston was the early leader in the importation of Africans. By the 1730s Boston had already lost its initial preeminence to more southern ports. Nevertheless, a well-established African community remained a feature of the city.

One of the largest populations of Africans lived in early Philadelphia. Early institutions and social agencies benefited the entire African community in North America.

New York’s African population was increased as a direct result of the Dutch merchants’ desire for cheap labor. New York became a key venue for early African protests and demonstrations.

The city of Richmond had a larger percentage of Africans than any major city in the 18th century.

Charleston was a major center for importation of Africans from the West Indies. Numerous slave-captains built huge plantations near the coast, thereby assuring a sizable African population.

As the principal importation port for Africans from what is now Ghana, Nigeria, Camerons, Congo, and Angola, Savannah became a key station for the relocation of Africans.

PRINCIPAL AFRICAN SETTLEMENTS OF COLONIAL AMERICA

African-American Participation in the Revolutionary War

Battles with known black participation
Note: Vermont claimed by New York during the Revolution; admitted to the Union as a state in 1791.
Free African Americans in the Colonies

Along with the expanded numbers, the growth of free African-American communities and the development of independent black institutions came a newfound confidence. No individual better personified the new free black identity of the early American republic better than Benjamin Banneker. Born to free black parents in 1731, Banneker grew up and lived on the Maryland tobacco farm he inherited from his father. From an early age, Banneker showed an aptitude for science and mathematics, building one of the first mechanical clocks in the colonies at age 21. In the late 1780s, he developed an interest in astronomy and, borrowing books and instruments from a neighboring white planter, Banneker published his first astronomical almanac in 1791. After reading Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia—and taking exception to the author's remarks about black mental inferiority—Banneker sent the Declaration of Independence author a copy. The two began an exchange of letters on the subject of African-American intelligence and ability. While recognizing Banneker's extraordinary achievement, Jefferson helped get him appointed surveyor for the new capital city of Washington—remained skeptical that Banneker had produced the almanac on his own.
Slavery and the Slave Trade

The Underground Railroad map illustrates the routes used by fugitive slaves to escape to freedom in the Northern states and Canada. The map highlights various routes and key locations along the Underground Railroad, emphasizing the network of secret societies and individuals who worked to assist enslaved individuals in their journey to freedom.
SLAVE UPRISINGS IN NORTH AMERICA, 1663-1831

1. 1663: African slaves join white indentured servants in Gloucester County, Virginia, to plan a revolt. When the plan is discovered, the black leaders are beheaded and their heads publicly displayed in the village square.

2. 1712: Twenty-one slaves are executed in New York City for their part in an uprising.

3. 1739: Fifty to 100 slaves at Stono, South Carolina, flee the South with stolen arms, killing all whites who attempt to stop them. They are later captured.

4. 1741: Although the evidence is scant, 31 slaves are charged with burning down several properties in New York and executed.

5. 1741: In Boston, slaves are caught trying to escape to Florida in a stolen boat.

6. 1800: Gabriel Prosser, a Virginia slave, plans an attack on Richmond, Virginia. Most of the 40,000 slaves living in the region were thought to know the plan. Before the revolt is set to take place, the plan is discovered and Richmond placed under martial law. Then torrential rains on the evening that the uprising is set to begin disrupt the plan completely. Prosser is captured and hanged a month later.

7. 1822: Denmark Vesey, a free black carpenter, plans a revolt to conquer Charleston, South Carolina. When his plan is discovered, he and 47 others are executed.

8. 1831: Nat Turner, a slave whose father had escaped to freedom, leads a group of slaves through Southampton County, Virginia, after swearing to kill all whites in surrounding plantations. Just over 24 hours later, he and his men have killed more than 60 white men, women, and children. In retaliation, whites throughout the South kill more than 100 blacks, regardless of their involvement in the revolt.

* Vermont claimed by New York during the Revolution; admitted to the Union as a state in 1791.
Westward

Black Explorers in the West

Westward exploration took place in what is now the American Southwest. The area was home to various Native American tribes, including the Navajo, Zuni, and Hopi. The first European to visit the region was the Spanish explorer Esteban Echeverria in 1540. He was followed by various expeditions led by Spanish conquistadors, including Francisco Vásquez de Coronado.

Among the most remarkable stories of early exploration is that of Esteban Dorantes, a mixed-race Spaniard who accompanied Coronado's expedition. In 1540, Dorantes was captured by the Navajos and became a slave. He later escaped and returned to Spain, where he wrote a detailed account of his experiences.

Dorantes' narrative is a testament to the resilience of the indigenous peoples of the Southwest and their resistance to European colonization.

The travels of Esteban Dorantes

Dorantes' account is one of the earliest records of the American Southwest and provides valuable insights into the lives of the indigenous peoples who lived there.

York, an enslaved African serving William Clark, played a crucial role during the Lewis and Clark expedition. York was a vital member of the expedition, serving as a guide, hunter, and builder. His role was crucial in helping the explorers navigate the challenging terrain and gather resources.

The Lewis and Clark expedition was a significant event in the history of American exploration. It led to the establishment of the United States' claim to the Louisiana Purchase and paved the way for westward expansion.

The Beckwourth Trail

The Beckwourth Trail was forged by famed African-American mountain man James Beckwourth. The trail was used by many early American settlers and was a vital route for trade and transportation.

Several decades later, the trail was abandoned, but it remains an important reminder of the history and resilience of the American West.

The image shows a map of the Westward exploration routes, highlighting the Lewis and Clark Route and the Beckwourth Trail. The map also includes other significant trails and territories, such as the Oregon Trail and the Mexican Cession.
The Wild West

Beckwourth Pass through the Sierra Nevada Mountains was discovered and named after Jim Beckwourth, an African-American guide, explorer, and trapper.

Gobo Fango, an account of whose life can be found in Our Pioneer Heritage published in 1965 by Kate B. Carter, came to Utah from South Africa.

George Monroe and William Robinson rode the famous "Pony Express" between Merced and Mariposa, California.

Abel Burns, the servant of Joseph Smith is the only black man in heaven, according to Mormon tradition.

Willis Meade, of Moa, Kansas, became famous after tracking down and killing a wolf named "Two Toes" who had terrorized ranchers and killed many head of cattle.

Traveling with Lewis and Clark, York, a slave, was used to smooth the way in dealings with Indians.

Boise Ikard, saved an entire crew from a stampeding herd while working the "Goodnight Trail" between Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado.

Summit and Boley are the all African-American started in Oklahoma.
Former Slaves Making History

Freed by the New York State Emancipation Act of 1827, Ms. Baumfree lived for a short period in New York City before changing her name to Sojourner Truth.

Born Isabella Baumfree in 1797 in Hurley, Ulster Co., New York

Addressed the National Women’s Suffrage Convention in Akron, 1852

Died 1883 in Battle Creek, Michigan
African Americans and Legislation

The Dred Scott Decision

- Free states
- Territories open to slavery by Dred Scott decision 1857
- Slave states
- Kansas entered the Union as a free state in 1861.
Civil War, 1861-1865

Major African American Battles Sites during the Civil War
Black spy activity during the Civil War, 1861-1865
Reconstruction

The first African-Americans elected to the U.S. Congress were, from left to right, Robert Brown Elliot of South Carolina, Joseph Rainey of South Carolina, Jefferson Franklin Long of Georgia, Benjamin Turner of North Carolina, Robert DeLarge of South Carolina, Josiah Walls of Virginia, and Hiram Revels of Mississippi. (Library of Congress)
Historical Black Colleges Established during Reconstruction, 1865-1877
Ida B. Wells married militant race leader Ferdinand Barnett in Chicago and went on to become chair of the Anti-Lynching Bureau of the National Afro-American Rights League.

Ida B. Wells Barnett was born in 1862 in Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Ida B. Wells Barnett worked as a teacher in Memphis, Tennessee where she compiled the first statistical pamphlet on lynching called the Red Record.

Ms. Wells Barnett became part owner and editor of the Memphis Free Speech.

After exposing the facts behind the lynching of three African American business men, the paper was demolished by hoodlums in May, 1892.

Early Activism
Plessy v. Ferguson and the Spread of Jim Crow Laws in the South, 1896-1900

Northern cities where Jim Crow existed before 1896 (by practice, not law)
1900 Date that Jim Crow laws were passed in southern states
- States with legal segregation and dates Jim Crow laws passed
- States that did not pass Jim Crow laws but practiced segregation
- Major race riots at the start of the Jim Crow era

Map showing states with legal segregation and dates Jim Crow laws passed.
Moving West

Black Towns in Oklahoma and Kansas, ca. 1900

Ho for Kansas!
Brethren, Friends, & Fellow Citizens:
I feel thankful to inform you that the
REAL ESTATE
AND
Homestead Association,
Will Leave Here the
15th of April, 1878,
In pursuit of Homes in the Southwestern
Lands of America, at Transportation
Rates, cheaper than ever
was known before.

For full information inquire of
Benj. Singleton, better known as old Pap,
No. 8 NORTHEAST ST.
Bureau of Emigration and Agriculture, as it is a dangerous thing
is to fall in their hands.
Nacogdoches, Tex., March 18, 1879

A recruitment sign for Singleton’s
Homestead Association
(Library of Congress)

“Pop” Singleton (Library of Congress)
Booker T. Washington was born on a plantation near Hale’s Ford in Franklin County, Virginia in 1856 or 1859. The Booker T. Washington National Monument now marks the site of his birth.

Booker T. Washington went back to West Virginia to become the only teacher of African Americans. So eager to learn were his many students that Mr. Washington spent entire days teaching children and equally long nights instructing adults.

Booker began working in Virginia salt mines at age nine.

Major speeches of Booker T. Washington

Booker T. Washington and his mother spent many nights studying their A-B-C’s by light of fire. Working in a mine, Booker T. overheard a conversation about Hampton, a school which taught trades to Negroes. With the support of nickle and dime contributions from his neighbors, Washington struck out for Hampton when he was fifteen.
Education and Innovation: Early 20th Century Leaders

Booker T. Washington (center) with President William Howard Taft (left) and industrialist Andrew Carnegie (right) outside the White House (Library of Congress)

George Washington Carver was born a slave during the Civil War and died 86 years later an internationally renowned agricultural scientist. Carver was the most famous educator at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute and is remembered for urging students to end their reliance on cotton, which left the soil depleted and unworkable, and to start planting nutrient-rich, soil-renewing crops, such as peanuts and sweet potatoes. To further encourage the switch to trees and other perennials, Carver created hundreds of money-making byproducts, including coffee substitutes, rose, sauerkraut, cream, ink, dyes, and胜利, among many giving small farmers hope for self-sufficiency. Throughout his career, Carver experiment with improved methods of cultivation. In his later years, he became a prophet of black achievements and was widely celebrated in the United States and throughout the world.
African Americans and World War I
Making History in Sports

Negro League Teams and Their Locations

- St. Louis, MO Giants, Stars
- Kansas City, MO Monarchs
- Memphis, TN Red Sox
- Nashville, TN Elite Giants
- Atlanta, GA Black Crackers
- Birmingham, AL Black Barons
- Nashville, TN ABCs, Athletics
- Indianapolis, IN American Giants, Giants
- Chicago, IL American Giants, Giants
- Detroit, MI Bears, Browns, Elites, Hornets, Red Sox, Tate Stars
- Toledo, OH Tigers
- Columbus, OH Bluebirds, Buckeyes
- Homestead, PA Grays
- Cincinnati, OH Clowns, Cuban Stars, Tigers
- Cleveland, OH Bears, Browns, Elites, Hornets, Red Sox, Tate Stars
- Pittsburg, PA Crawfords, Keystones
- Harrisburg, PA Dodgers, Elites
- Newark, NJ Black Yankees, Cubans
- New York, NY Black Yankees, Cubans
- Brooklyn, NY Eagles
- Philadelphia, PA Stars
- Baltimore, MD Black Stars
- Pittsburgh, PA Grays
- St. Louis, MO Cardinals
- Milwaukee, WI Bears

Stars of the Negro Leagues

- Josh Gibson: Career 1929–1946, Position: Catcher, Teams: Pittsburgh Crawfords, Homestead Grays, Mexican and Puerto Rican teams. Career Highlights: With an estimated 823 career home runs, Gibson is thought to have been an even more prodigious home run hitter than Hank Aaron or Babe Ruth. He also hit for average—with a .460 average in 1938, and .321 in 1942.
1920’s Cultural Center: Harlem
African-American Involvement in the Liberation of Holocaust Survivors, 1944-1945
Heroes of War
Korea: Integration at War
Major Events in the Civil Rights Movement, 1955-1970
African American Youth and Civil Rights
Civil Rights Leaders: Martin Luther King, Jr.’s U.S. and World Travels, 1960-1968
Black Empowerment

Principal Chapters of US, Black Panthers, & SNCC

Maulana Karenga's US
Black Panthers
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam
Literary History
Mapping the Life of Shirley Chisholm

Making Political History
Access the latest census data and maps at www.factfinder.census.gov.
Online guides for cartographic resources are available on the GRMC Web page at [http://www.bsu.edu/library/collections/gcmc/](http://www.bsu.edu/library/collections/gcmc/).

The staff of the GRMC is available for research assistance or instructional sessions Monday through Friday from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Accommodations can be made for evening classes.

Please contact Melissa Gentry for more information at 765/285-1097 or mgentry@bsu.edu.