The Geography of Black History
Map 10: Regions in Which Slaves Landed, 1501–1867

The Caribbean and South America accounted for 95 percent of the captives arriving in the Americas; fewer than 4 percent disembarked in what became the United States. A very small share of slaves disembarked in Africa after their ships were diverted because slaves onboard rebelled and, in the nineteenth century, because the slave trade became illegal and vessels were subject to capture and condemnation.
A small direct traffic in captives from Africa to Maryland and Virginia had developed by the late seventeenth century. Smaller numbers entered New York and Rhode Island. Many others, not counted here, arrived from Caribbean ports. (Note that the circle icons refer to ports, not colonies. For Virginia and Maryland they refer to river trade.)
Map 139: Slaves Arriving at North American Mainland Ports, 1711–1775

Map 140: Slaves Arriving at North American Mainland Ports, 1776–1860

After 1710 increasing numbers of African slaves arrived in mainland North America through more entry points. The proportion of captives arriving directly from Africa, mostly in British and British colonial vessels, rose sharply. Through 1770 most slaves disembarked at points around the Chesapeake Bay as tobacco growing expanded. Arrivals in Virginia fell away before the American Revolution, partly because demand for enslaved labor in the Chesapeake region was met by natural reproduction and partly because there were competing demands for labor in South Carolina and Georgia for rice and indigo cultivation.

The American Revolution curtailed arrivals of enslaved Africans in mainland North America. Among the newly independent states, only Georgia for a brief period after 1783 and later South Carolina in 1804–1807, as cotton growing was becoming important, opened their borders to vessels bringing captives directly from Africa. The number of slaves coming to mainland North America through Florida (under Spanish control until 1818) and Louisiana (under French control until 1803) also shrank after 1775. A few vessels brought in captives to the United States directly from Africa until 1860 even though it was illegal to do so after 1808.
York, an enslaved African serving William Clark, played a crucial role during the Lewis and Clark expedition. The American explorers were guided by a Frenchman named Jean-Baptiste Charbonneau and his Native American wife Sacagawea. Because York spoke a little French as well as English, he served as company translator, not only within the company, but with Native Americans encountered along the way. The red line on the map above shows the westward route of the expedition. The Beckwith Trail, forged by famed African-American mountain man James Beckwith several decades later, is shown in green.
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.

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

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.
Fifty-fourth Massachusetts Regiment storming Fort Wagner, South Carolina (Library of Congress)
FREEDOM FIGHTERS
James Harris of the 38th U.S. Colored Troops (right) earned a congressional Medal of Honor (far right) for gallantry in battle, as did 27 other African-American soldiers and sailors. Three of those came from the Fourth U.S. Colored Infantry, which distinguished itself in the battle of New Market Heights, Virginia, in 1864. Composed of free blacks and slaves from Maryland, the group lost 292 men. Some survivors (below) gathered for a photo in 1865.
Black soldiers in the Union Army

- Union territory
- Border slave state
- Confederate territory
- Numbers of black soldiers serving in the Union Army, by state

- Extent of Union control, spring 1864

- 20,133
- 10,000
- 1,000
- 47

Map of the United States showing the distribution of black soldiers serving in the Union Army during the American Civil War.
A freedman's first vote (Library of Congress)

HARPER'S WEEKLY
A JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION

U.S. Army officer protects freedmen (Library of Congress)
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)
African-American troops played a significant role in the Spanish-American War, including at the famous Battle of San Juan Hill. The map shown here illustrates battles during the campaign for Cuba in which African-American troops played a part.
An average of 100 Blacks were killed every year between 1890 and 1910 in the South.
Ball Brothers Factory Band, 1925
Carl Burnam, Local 499 leader of the United Auto Workers, Muncie, 1925
200,000 Blacks served in Europe.
World War I volunteers, Muncie
To bring attention to escalating violence against African Americans after World War I, the NAACP flew this flag outside of its headquarters office in New York (National Archives)
1. Founded in 1809 as the Free Baptist Church of New York City, the Abyssinian Baptist Church became a center of civil rights activism when a young preacher named Adam Clayton Powell Sr. took over the pulpit a century later. The church building, dedicated in 1923, was a cavernous Gothic structure, featuring an Italian marble pulpit and imported stained glass windows. The congregation numbered more than 7,000.

2. Opened in 1922, the Cotton Club became the premier showcase in America for black musicians. The elegant interior, featuring primitivist decor, helped to inspire the "jungle sound" of Duke Ellington, who opened there in 1927. Other jazz greats who played there included Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and singer Lena Horne. Sadly, during the 1920s, black audiences could not listen to these musicians since the club was for whites only.

3. The Harlem YWCA, completed in 1919, offered some of the finest athletic facilities in New York City at the time. It also sponsored a host of conferences on subjects like women's suffrage, antilynching legislation, and civil rights activism. Among the figures who spoke there were Ida Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Booker T. Washington.

4. The Dunbar Apartments, located at W. 149th and 150th Streets between Seventh and Eighth Avenues and financed by John D. Rockefeller Jr., were the first large cooperative built for African Americans. Among the prominent African Americans who lived at the Dunbar Apartments were W. E. B. DuBois, actor and singer Paul Robeson, labor leader A. Philip Randolph, and Arctic explorer Matthew A. Henson.
Ollie Shoecraft, the only African American worker in the Works Progress Administration crew, Muncie, 1934
Indiana High School Boys Basketball Champions, 1911-1997

Jack Mann, 1931
UNITED WE WIN
The Tuskegee Airmen, 1943–1945

Darrie Miller, a messman in the U.S. Navy, was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism at Pearl Harbor. This poster, issued by the federal government, commemorates his actions.
Mrs. Eugene Williams and sons, Muncie, 1945
African American branch of the Muncie YMCA, 1948 (segregated until 1960)
Integrated American troops in Korea (National Archives)

Ray Armstrong, 1951 City Council
Geraldine Evans Findley, 1954
Orval Faubus reaps political benefits of ardent segregation
Democratic first primary elections for governor, 1954-60
Muncie Central Band, 1926

Longfellow Elementary School, sixth grade
Less than 1% of southern Blacks attended integrated schools in the 1960’s
126 towns hosted sit-ins; 36,000 were jailed.
May 4 - Seven blacks and six whites leave Washington, D.C., on one Greyhound bus and one Trailways bus.

May 4-7 - The buses travel through Richmond, Petersburg, and Lynchburg, Virginia. At each stop both black and white riders use “whites only” lunch counters and bathrooms without incident.

May 7 - Freedom rider Charles Perkins, an African American, attempts to get a shoe shine in a whites-only barbershop at a Charlotte, North Carolina, bus station. Although he is refused service, he remains in the shop until police place him under arrest.

May 9 - In Rock Hill, South Carolina, a band of whites beat John Lewis after he attempts to enter the bus station waiting room. Albert Bigelow is also beaten. Although the police make no arrests, they allow riders to enter the waiting room.

May 11 - In Winnebago, South Carolina, freedom riders James Peck and Henry Thomas are arrested for attempting to integrate a bus station lunch counter.

May 11–13 - The buses travel through Sumter and Camden, South Carolina, and Augusta and Athens, Georgia, without incident before arriving in Atlanta, where the riders regroup in preparation for the next leg of the journey—into Alabama and Mississippi.

May 14 - Outside Anniston, Alabama, the Greyhound is surrounded by a mob, who break windows and slash the bus tires. One member of the mob tosses a torch through a window, filling the bus with smoke. As riders try to flee the bus, the crowd attempts to hold the doors shut, before beating passengers as they escape. The local hospital refuses to treat the injured riders. An hour later, the Trailways bus arrives in Anniston, where its passengers are also beaten before the bus leaves for Birmingham. There, whites board and attempt to force all blacks to the back of the bus. When two white riders attempt to intervene, they too are beaten. One, a 61-year-old retired teacher named Walter Bergman, is left close to death, with permanent brain damage. The other needs 56 stitches in the head.

May 15–17 - Despite the attack, the riders vow to continue on to Montgomery, Alabama. When no driver will take them, the group abandons its plans. The Justice Department arranges for the freedom riders to fly to New Orleans, Louisiana. Although a bomb threat delays takeoff, the group flies to New Orleans.

May 17 - Convincing that ending the freedom rides would reward their violence, Diane Nash, head of SNCC’s Nashville chapter, organizes a new group of freedom riders, this time black. The new group leaves Nashville, bound for Birmingham, Alabama.

May 18 - The freedom riders arrive in Birmingham. They are arrested and begin a prison hunger strike. Police respond by removing riders 150 miles north to the Tennessee border. There, they force the riders off the highway and impound their bus. Diane Nash and a few others attempt to bring them back to Birmingham, but the authorities stop the riders for the first time in two days and head for their next destination.

May 19 - The state of Alabama issues an injunction into and travel within the State of Alabama, so-called ‘freedom rides’ and other acts of ‘agitation’ to provoke breaches of the peace.”

May 20 - The freedom riders wait in the Birmingham jail. Their driver agrees to take them to Montgomery by an angry crowd of several hundred, with clubs. One passenger is burned on him and his clothes are set on fire. U.S. Attorney General John Seigenthaler, sent by President Kennedy to monitor the situation, is kept at his attempts to assist one feeling, which allow the riot to continue for many hours. In Washington, Attorney General Robert Kennedy orders 350 U.S. marshals into Montgomery to restore order.

May 21 - U.S. marshals begin to arrive. Looting and violence flies into Montgomery. Churchmen and leaders threaten to arrest the mass meeting of the freedom riders. A white mob forms outside the Baptist Church, trapping a crowd meeting there.

May 22 - King, Abernathy, and Nash of SCLC, and Lewis of CORE, announce that the riders will be arrested if any violence is threatened. The riders are arrested and convicted of violating Alabama’s ‘picketing’ laws. They are sentenced to 30 days in jail, with a royalty on the Mason Street Penitentiary, where they remain for almost a month before they are released.
On June 21, 1964, three civil rights workers—Mississippian James Chaney and New Yorkers Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman—were arrested for alleged traffic violations outside of Philadelphia, Mississippi. After being held for several hours in a Philadelphia jail cell, the three were released. Fearing for their lives, the three young civil rights workers headed for the nearby Alabama state line. Before they reached it, however, the three were stopped by local Klansmen and murdered.
African-American Voter Registration, 1964

The map above reflects the percentages of African Americans registered to vote in 1964.

Legend:
- 50+ percent
- 25.0–49.9 percent
- 0–24.9 percent
Four years of violence, 1965–1968
riot that resulted in injuries or deaths:

- 1965
- 1967
- 1966
- 1968
Detroit, 1967
the worst riot in a century

- burning
- looting
- sniping
- gutted areas
- riot areas

Legend:
- Burning
- Looting
- Sniping
- Gutted areas
- Riot areas
Robert Kennedy at Ball State University, April 4, 1968
Journey of a King:
The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Ball State University Libraries GIS Research & Map Collection,
From the book: "MLK: Journey of a King" by Tony Judit

January 15, 1929: Martin Luther King Jr. is born in Atlanta, Georgia.

February 1950: King graduates in 1953 from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

February 1954: King earns a Ph.D. from Boston University.

February 1957: King marries Coretta Scott, and they have four children.

February 1963: King delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington, D.C.

February 1964: King wins the Nobel Peace Prize.

February 1965: King leads the Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C.

February 1966: King is arrested in Memphis, Tennessee, for leading a political march for black voting rights.

February 1967: King is shot and killed in Memphis, Tennessee.

February 1968: King's memory is honored with the inauguration of the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia.

February 1973: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

March 1986: King is posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

March 1992: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 1992: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 1994: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 1998: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2000: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2002: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2004: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2006: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2008: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2010: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2012: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2014: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2016: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2018: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2020: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

April 2022: King is posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.
The map above reflects the percentages of African Americans registered to vote in 1964.

The map above reflects the percentages of African Americans registered to vote in the South in 1970.
Hurley Goodall, first Black elected to the Muncie School Board in 1971
African Americans attending schools with whites in the South and border states, 1954–1964

Percentage:

- 68
- 57
- 20
- 10
- 4
- 0

date not available

1954

1964
President Ronald Reagan signed a bill proposed by Representative Katie Hall of Indiana creating a federal holiday to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on November 2, 1983.
Cities with Failed Desegregation Policies Since 1994

- San Francisco, CA
- Denver, CO
- Minneapolis, MN
- Chicago, IL
- Indianapolis, IN
- Cleveland, OH
- St. Louis, MO
- Louisville, KY
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Wilmington, NJ
- Arlington, NC
- Yonkers, NY
- Charlotte, SC
- Orlando, FL

Selected cities in which school desegregation policy has faced challenges since 1994.
Indianapolis, 2012
Trials, Triumphs, and Trailblazers: Historic Women in African American History