P R I D E  I N  C O L O R

African-Americans have a wide-ranging and interesting history in the United States. Yet for many years, that history was ignored.

And then Carter G. Woodson stepped in. A teacher and founder of what is now The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, Woodson began pushing for recognition of African-American history, especially in schools. In 1926, he established Negro History Week.

Negro History Week eventually grew into Black History Month, an event celebrated nationwide every February. Today, Black History Month not only provides an opportunity to learn about African-American history but also to foster an appreciation for the African-American culture and its significant contributions to this country.

On the following pages, we, too, will take a brief look at the history and cultural contributions of African-Americans. While it is impossible to cover the entire scope of the subject, the information and activities provided in this supplement will help you understand, among other things, where African-Americans have been and how far they have come.

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African-Americans trace their roots to a continent far away — a land called Africa. Located almost 5,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean, Africa is the second largest continent on Earth and more than four times the size of the United States.

Most ancestors of today’s African-Americans lived in the western part of Africa, in an area known as the Western Sudan. Long before they came to America, they lived in well-planned cities with sophisticated governments and distinct empires and cultures. They profited from an economy based on farming, gold mining, and trade with Arabs in northern Africa.

Slavery was also a part of the African culture. Most of the Africans who became slaves were captured during battles between neighboring African peoples and sold to the Arabs in the north.

In the 1500s, Portugal and Spain also began buying African slaves, mostly to work on sugar plantations developed by its colonists in Brazil. Other European countries joined the slave trade in the 1600s and began transporting African slaves to the American colonies.

After being captured or purchased from African slave traders, called caboceers, the slaves were packed tightly onto ships and sent to the West Indies, a journey known as the Middle Passage. Probably 5 percent of the 10 million slaves shipped across the Atlantic Ocean ended up in North America. For them, the journey by ship took several months. Many died because of unsanitary and unsafe traveling conditions.

The journey to the New World might well be considered the easy part. Those who made it across the Atlantic Ocean faced an even greater hardship — one that would continue for many years to come and would become central the story of African-American heritage.

1. As you begin your study of African-American history, do some research on Africa, particularly western Africa where the ancestors of most African-Americans lived. Collect news stories that originate in Africa. (You can tell where a story originates by looking at the dateline, the name of a city or country listed at the beginning of the story.)

2. Slave traders conducted their business for one reason: to make money. Their goal was to deliver as many slaves as possible with each shipment to the New World. Imagine that you were an African slave packed tightly below deck with hundreds of other people and being transported across the Atlantic to an unknown place. You were chained there day and night, except for a brief period of exercise. All around you was sickness, filth, stench, and even death. Write five separate journal entries describing what it might have been like for you.
Slavery:  
A ‘Peculiar Institution’

Slavery — the practice of one person “owning” another person — was not new to the world when Europeans began shipping Africans to North America. It had been practiced in many parts of the world, including Africa, for thousands of years.

Many Africans who were forced to come to America were prisoners-of-war, captured by warring African tribes and traded to the European colonists for valuable items such as rum, cloth, and guns.

The first slaves in the Colonies — a group of 20 — arrived in Jamestown, Va., in 1619 as indentured servants. At the time, there were also whites and Indians working as indentured servants in the Colonies. Indentured servants worked under contract for a period of time, usually four to seven years, and then they became free.

Others who were brought from Africa were sold as slaves at public auctions. After being inspected by prospective buyers, slaves were sold to white masters, who often kept them as “property” for the rest of their lives.

Slavery became widespread throughout the South where workers were needed on the large plantations and farms. Colonists in the North didn’t need as many slaves because there weren’t as many farms there.

With the invention of the cotton gin in 1793, the demand for slaves increased even more. The machine could pluck the seeds from cotton faster than 50 people working by hand, so farmers needed more slaves to plant and pick the cotton. Many believe the cotton gin contributed to the growth of slavery more than any other development in history.

By the late 1700s, one out of three people living in the South was a slave. By 1860, there were four million slaves living throughout the South. By contrast, less than half a million free African-Americans lived in the nation — mostly in the North.

The conditions under which slaves lived varied. Slave codes, or laws, were passed by the Colonies to govern their treatment.

Famous Slave Revolts

1. One of the best-known slave revolts was led by a Virginia slave named Nat Turner. Turner claimed to have been chosen by God to free his people. So, in 1831, he led about 70 slaves from plantation to plantation, killing slave owners and their families and setting their slaves free. By the time state and federal troops had captured Turner, almost 60 whites and at least 70 slaves had been killed. Turner and some of his followers were later executed.

2. With the goal of making the state of Virginia a state just for blacks, Gabriel Prosser planned one of the biggest and most organized slave revolts of all. Trouble was, the uprising never took place.

On the night of Aug. 30, 1800, Prosser and about 1,000 other slaves met outside the city of Richmond, ready to seize the city armories and kill most of the whites. But a storm flooded bridges and roads to the city, forcing Prosser to postpone the revolt. In the meantime, two slaves told their owner about the plot. The owner informed Gov. James Monroe, who called in the state militia, and Prosser and some of his followers were soon captured and hanged.

Types of Slaves

Field slaves were those who worked in plantation fields and answered to a white overseer — or to a black trustee who was put in charge of other slaves. A field slave’s day was long and difficult, often lasting from dawn until dark.

Field slaves lived in small shacks on their master’s property. A typical slave’s cabin had dirt floors, one window, and an opening for a door. An entire family might live in one room with a bed, a table, and a couple of chairs.

Domestic slaves, or house slaves, worked inside or around their master’s home as cooks, nannies, gardeners, and servants. They usually lived in their master’s house and led a more comfortable life than field slaves.

However, domestic slaves were more subject to their owners’ wishes.

Sometimes, African slaves were bought in family groups. But often, a husband and wife, mother and child, or sister and brother were sold separately, never to see each other again.
These codes required that owners provide their slaves with basic needs — food, clothing, and shelter.

At the same time, though, the slave codes severely restricted slaves’ rights. Slaves, for instance, could not receive an education, could not testify against white people in courts, and could not own weapons.

Many slaves were treated badly. They were made to feel ashamed of their heritage and not allowed to observe many of their native customs. Some were beaten without reason and accused of crimes they did not commit.

Many slaves protested these conditions by running away, destroying property, refusing to eat, faking illnesses, or disobeying orders. Revolts and protests were common. However, if caught, a slave was often severely punished or killed.

Despite the widespread use of slaves, there were Americans who deplored slavery. They were called abolitionists.

Many abolitionists attacked slavery in writings and speeches. One, William Lloyd Garrison, first published "The Liberator," an anti-slavery newspaper, in 1831. In 1847, Frederick Douglass voiced his opposition to slavery in his newspaper, "North Star." Others, such as Harriet Tubman, helped runaway slaves escape to freedom on the underground railroad — a secret network of houses and hideouts.

Slavery became a major issue in the presidential election of 1860. Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate and eventual winner, opposed slavery. After his election, the South feared he would put an end to slavery. As a result, one southern state, South Carolina, seceded from the Union. Six other slave states followed, and with tensions mounting, Southern (Confederate) troops attacked Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. The Civil War — which Lincoln called a fight against slavery — began.

In July 1862, at the urging of Frederick Douglass, the North accepted blacks into the army. Douglass’ sons, Lewis and Charles, were among the first to enlist. In all, almost 200,000 blacks saw combat. Another 200,000 volunteered in service units for the North’s (Union) army.

On Jan 1, 1863, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, an order freeing all slaves in states at war with the Union. Two years later, the North won the Civil War, and all slaves were free.

As difficult as it might be to believe, slavery exists today in some parts of Africa, as well as in parts of Asia and South America.

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Activities

1. One of the slave owners’ harsh tactics was to keep slaves uneducated. As one slave said, “Our ignorance was the greatest hold the South had on us.” However, many managed to teach themselves to read and write. In small groups, talk about why the slave owners wanted to keep the slaves uneducated. Then talk about how the slaves might have educated themselves. What materials and resources might they have used?

2. Imagine what life might have been like as a slave. Conduct some research to find out what a typical day was like for either a field slave or a domestic slave, then write a journal entry describing that day.

3. "North Star" was an abolitionist newspaper that expressed the anti-slavery views of publisher Frederick Douglass. Today, newspaper editors express their views in editorials. Find an editorial in your newspaper and see if you can differentiate the facts and the opinions in the editorial. Underline the facts in red and the opinions in blue.

4. Now, assume the role of a newspaper editor during the time when slavery was commonplace in America. Write an anti-slavery editorial. Remember: Editorials are opinion pieces but they must be supported by facts. Do your research!
"When Freedom Came ..."

"... folks left home, out in the streets, crying, praying, singing, shouting, yelling. ... Then come the calm. It was sad then. So many folks done dead, things tore up, and nowheres to go and nothing to eat, nothing to do. ... Folks got sick, so hungry. Some folks starved nearly to death."

— From Lay My Burden Down, edited by B.A. Botkin, as quoted in The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words, Milton Meltzer

"All we had to eat was what we could beg, and sometimes we went three days without a bit to eat. Sometimes we'd pick a few berries. ...

"I settled on some land, we cut some trees and split them open and stood them on end with the tops together for a house. ...

"I don't know as I 'spected nothing from freedom, but they turned us out like a bunch of stray dogs, no homes, no clothing, no nothing, not 'nough food to last us one meal. ..."

— Ibid

**When the 13th Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution was approved and slavery was formally abolished in 1865, it was a huge victory for slaves. But that victory was quickly overshadowed by the fact that most of the four million freed slaves, called freedmen, had neither homes nor money and couldn't even read or write. What's more, many cities in the South lay in ruins, and there were few places to get jobs — for blacks or whites.

To help the freed slaves and poor whites during this time, which became known as Reconstruction, the U.S. Congress set up the Freedmen's Bureau, an organization that distributed food and supplies, set up hospitals, helped people resettle, and founded schools. For seven years, it made great strides in helping both blacks and whites.

Yet, the Freedmen's Bureau could do little to help calm Southern hostilities toward African-Americans. Many white Southerners were upset about the African-Americans' newfound freedom. Some states passed laws, known as black codes, which limited African-Americans' rights. For instance, in some states, African-Americans still could not own land, had to be off the streets at certain times, could be jailed for being unemployed, and could be beaten by their employers.

Appalled at these black codes, a group of Northern congressmen called the Radical Republicans fought to have them abolished. Eventually, they won approval of the Civil Rights Acts of 1866, which gave African-Americans the rights and privileges of full citizenship. That same year, African-Americans legally earned the right to vote. As a result, many were elected to public office for the first time.

With the law on African-Americans' side, some Southern whites began to take matters into their own hands. In 1865 and 1866, some 5,000 African-Americans were murdered. Sometimes, law enforcement officers were involved,
but most of the attacks were carried out by lawless groups. When Rutherford B. Hayes was elected president in 1876, the Reconstruction of the South — and many of the gains African-Americans had made — effectively came to an end. Once again, African-Americans found themselves in a struggle for basic rights and privileges. It was not until the modern civil rights struggle began that African-Americans would see many of those freedoms restored.

1. Reread the quotes at the beginning of the story on page 6. Then write a poem that reflects the contrasting feelings slaves experienced when they were first set free.

2. Write five front-page newspaper headlines that might have appeared when the 13th Amendment was approved, formally abolishing slavery. For extra credit: Write a news story that might have appeared.

3. Assume you are a newspaper reporter who gets an exclusive interview with one of the African-Americans elected to public office during the Reconstruction Era: Sens. Hiram R. Revels and Blance K. Bruce, Reps. Joseph H. Rainey, and Jefferson Long, and Lieutenant Govs. Oscar J. Dunn, Richard Gleaves, and Alonzo J. Ransier. Come up with 10 reporter’s questions you would ask, then get your answers by conducting research on your interviewee.

4. According to Gordon W. Allport, in his book, The Nature of Prejudice, there are five progressive levels of prejudice. These levels include: stereotyping a group of people; avoiding them; discriminating against them; attacking them, and, finally, killing them. African-Americans are one of a number of groups of people who have suffered from all levels of prejudice. In small groups, look through your newspaper for stories that illustrate the different levels of prejudice. For each example, talk about the consequences of the negative action reported.

Anne S. Dudley helped found one of the first schools for freedmen during Reconstruction at Harper’s Ferry, W. Va. She also founded Dudley Baptist Church, which is still in existence today.

Additional Facts

I’m Not Prejudiced!

Prejudice is defined as negative, irrational feelings or attitudes toward a group of people that are based not on fact but on preconceived ideas and notions. Throughout history, prejudice has caused harm and suffering to many groups of people. Many people are prejudiced without even knowing it. They might find themselves hating a person without even knowing why.

Or Am I?

Examine your feelings and your actions closely to see if you exhibit any signs of prejudice. If you do, think about how such feelings and actions affect the people around you. Then think about ways that you can change them.

Anne S. Dudley helped found one of the first schools for freedmen during Reconstruction at Harper’s Ferry, W. Va. She also founded Dudley Baptist Church, which is still in existence today.
Frederick Douglass
1817—1895
The most admired African-American leader of his time, Frederick Douglass was dedicated to the abolition of slavery and became one of the first to fight for blacks’ rights. He founded an anti-slavery newspaper, North Star, in 1847, and used it to criticize slavery and publicize the works of African-American writers.

Douglass, a former runaway slave, also served as a consultant to President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. He helped recruit African-Americans for the Union Army, including his own sons, Lewis and Charles.

Harriet Tubman
circa 1820—1913
Former slave Harriet Tubman was conductor of one of the most famous railroads in history. This railroad didn’t have boxcars, tracks, or even a whistle. But it did have passengers: runaway slaves.

Tubman’s railroad was the underground railroad — a series of houses and hideouts that runaway slaves used to gain freedom in the North. Despite great risk to all involved, Tubman helped more than 300 slaves escape.

Booker T. Washington
1856—1915
Believing that African-Americans would benefit more from a vocational education rather than a college education, Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama in 1881. There, blacks learned the skills that would lead to economic prosperity and, later, equality. Many disagreed with Washington, including other prominent African-Americans. But Washington’s role as founder and head of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) made him one of the most influential African-American leaders and educators of his time.

George Washington Carver
1864—1943
Until George Washington Carver came along, the only thing people did with peanuts was eat them. But Carver, a well-respected researcher and administrator at Tuskegee Institute, experimented with peanuts and made more than 300 products out of them, including soap, linoleum, ink, paint, and face powder.

The former slave devoted his life to research and won many honors for his achievements. Today, the state of New York recognizes Jan. 5 as Carver Day.

Ida B. Wells
1862—1931
More than anything, Ida B. Wells wanted justice for her people. And she didn’t care who knew it.

In 1889, Wells became part-owner and a reporter for Free Speech in Memphis, Tenn. When three friends were lynched for being “uppity,” Wells responded with an exposé about the white men responsible for the lynching and launched a successful crusade to stop violence against African-Americans. Her reporting helped bring an end to one of the most violent eras in black history.

W.E.B. Du Bois
1868—1963
William Edward Burghardt Du Bois was one of the leading opponents of racial discrimination in the early 1900s. He founded the Niagara Movement, which later became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, better known as the NAACP.

Du Bois was also the first African-American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University.
Meta Vaux Warrick
1877—1968

Born into an upper-middle-class family in Philadelphia, Meta Vaux Warrick developed a love for the arts at an early age. Later, at age 22, she traveled to Paris to study. There she was surrounded by such famous artists as Pablo Picasso and Auguste Rodin and won praise and fame for her sculpture of African subjects.

Upon her return to the United States, however, she received quite a different reception. Few galleries would display her art because she was African-American. Today, though, Warrick’s works are exhibited in many locations.

Malcolm X
1925—1964

Malcolm X was born Malcolm Little in Omaha, Neb. Because he disagreed with the adoption of white surnames by his slave ancestors, he replaced his last name — a slave name — with the letter X.

Malcolm X was a spokesman for the Black Muslims, a religious group that often promoted violence against whites and the voluntary separation of races in society. After a disagreement with Black Muslim leader Elijah Muhammed, Malcolm X left the Black Muslims and founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity.

Shortly afterward, Malcolm X was shot and killed in New York City. Three men, including two Black Muslims, were convicted of his murder.

Shirley Chisholm
1924—

Her work in establishing day-care centers for working mothers made Shirley Chisholm a household name in Brooklyn during the 1960s. So popular was this educator that Brooklyn residents elected her to the New York State legislature in 1964. Four years later, they sent her to the U.S. House of Representatives.

With that, Chisholm became the first African-American woman to serve in Congress. She served seven terms, and in 1972, she marked another milestone by running for president of the United States. She lost the bid but opened the door for other women with similar aspirations.

Colin Powell
1937—

The first African-American to serve as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — the highest military advisory group in the United States — was Colin Powell, a career Army man who served in Vietnam and commanded forces in South Korea, West Germany, and the United States. President George Bush named him to the post in 1989. Powell was appointed to the position of secretary of state, appointed in 2001 by President George W. Bush.

Awarded the Spingarn Medal by the NAACP for outstanding achievement by a black American, Powell has written an autobiography, My American Journey.

Condoleezza Rice
1954—

An all-black public school in Alabama might seem like a long way from the White House, but Condoleezza Rice has made the trip. Rice, who in 2001 became Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, grew up in the segregated South, where first-hand experiences with racism helped to shape her views. A bomb at a Birmingham church in 1963 killed a schoolmate of Rice.

Following a move to Colorado, Rice enrolled at the University of Denver at age 15. There, she later earned a Ph. D. in political science and started a career that includes teaching and Stanford University and writing several books on foreign policy.


**The Growth of Discrimination**

Despite temporary gains for African-Americans during the Reconstruction Era, the late 1800s and early 1900s were fraught with hardship. Many African-Americans were denied their voting rights, were segregated from their white counterparts, and suffered other forms of discrimination — all because of a simple belief held by most Southern whites that African-Americans were inferior human beings.

Part of this hardship was brought on by the enforcement of Jim Crow laws — state laws and practices that supported the segregation of blacks and whites. These laws and practices resulted in separate facilities for blacks and whites in many public places, including restaurants, schools, buses, telephone booths, hotels, restrooms, and churches. Some courtrooms even had separate Bibles for the swearing in of African-Americans.

But it was an 1892 attempt by an African-American to ride in a railroad car that ultimately put the brakes on the early civil rights gains. Homer Plessy, of New Orleans, took a seat in the first-class, all-white car of a train to test the strength of the U.S. Constitution and the Jim Crow laws that had spread throughout the South. The 34-year-old was promptly arrested and convicted in the court of Judge John H. Ferguson.

Plessy, along with a group of African-American supporters, fought the conviction all the way to the Supreme Court. In 1896, the court ruled against Plessy, saying that separate public facilities could be provided for the races as long as they were equal.

The Plessy vs. Ferguson ruling became known as the “separate but equal” doctrine.

It carried over into many aspects of everyday life until Thurgood Marshall, chief lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People challenged the Supreme Court’s decision in 1951.

Marshall fought to get the Supreme Court to overturn its 1896 ruling with a lawsuit that centered on Linda Brown, a 7-year-old African-American girl living in an integrated neighborhood in Topeka, Kan. While all the rest of the children in her neighborhood attended an all-white school down the street, Linda was forced to go to school across town. Her father, Oliver, decided to sue the school system to make sure Linda could attend school closer to home and have the opportunity for a better education.

Marshall argued that even though the school facilities were equal, the education students received was not. The Supreme Court agreed, saying segregated schools violated the 14th Amendment requiring all citizens be treated equally. All across America, schools were ordered to become integrated.

Several states desegregated their schools right away, including Delaware, Oklahoma, and Kentucky. But the transition was far from smooth. In Arkansas, for instance, the National Guard was called in to keep order and to help escort nine African-American students into the all-white Little Rock Central High School. Violence broke out in many cities as schools were ordered to desegregate.

Once again, African-Americans were embroiled in a struggle for the rights granted to them by law. This time they would join forces and launch a movement that would change the face of a nation forever.
1. Segregate your class into two groups — blue-eyed people and everyone else. The blue-eyed people will sit in the front of the class, go through the lunch line first, and get other privileges throughout the school day. At the end of the day, have a group discussion about how segregation makes you feel — regardless of which group you are in. Write your thoughts in the form of a letter to the editor or an editorial.

2. Discrimination was once an accepted practice. And even though it’s against the law today, discrimination still occurs. Look in the newspaper for stories about individuals or groups who think they have been discriminated against. What are the causes and effects of the issue involved? Discuss.

3. During this period of discrimination, there were those who spoke out about injustices suffered by African-Americans. Look through your newspaper for people who speak out about injustice. (The editorial page is the best place to start.) For each example, identify the injustice, the person or group of people affected, and the effects of the injustice. Discuss your thoughts in small groups.

4. Find out if your city or town has a local chapter of the NAACP. Throughout this study, watch for newspaper stories about this influential group. Consider inviting a representative to your class to talk about the NAACP’s past and its purpose today. Prior to your guest’s visit, prepare a list of reporter’s questions to ask.

Participants in the 1963 March on Washington demanded an end to racial discrimination.
Tiring of the Injustice

they'd suffered for so long, African-Americans began to band together in the mid-1950s to call attention to their plight.

Known as the civil rights movement, this joining together of African-Americans and their white supporters changed the face of America forever. It was marked by public protests and demonstrations, many of which involved clashes between the races. Following is a look at two events that highlighted the African-Americans' demand for equality and went a long way in ensuring that they received their most basic rights — once and for all.

**The Alabama Bus Boycott — 1955**

The Alabama Bus Boycott began quietly. At first, only a few people knew that an African-American seamstress named Rosa Parks had been arrested for refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man, as required by Montgomery city law. But by the end of the day on Thursday, Dec. 1, 1955, the entire African-American community in Montgomery knew what had happened and stood ready to do something about it.

Local African-American leaders formed a committee, called the Montgomery Improvement Association, and organized a one-day boycott of Montgomery city buses. A young Montgomery Baptist minister named Martin Luther King Jr., then 26, was chosen to lead the group.

The following Monday, Montgomery's buses were empty as African-Americans — young and old — took to the streets and walked to work. It appeared the boycott was a success.

But later that day, Rosa Parks was found guilty and fined $10 plus $4 for court costs. In turn, more than 3,000 people met and decided to continue the boycott until attitudes in Montgomery changed.

For 382 days, African-Americans and their white supporters refused to ride Montgomery buses. They stood their ground, despite several outbreaks of violence against them, including the bombing of King's home.

Finally, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Alabama's laws requiring segregation on buses was unconstitutional, and the boycott ended successfully. In celebration, King and other African-American leaders sat in the front of a bus and rode through the streets of Montgomery.

King later wrote:

"There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled by oppression. ... The story of Montgomery is the story of 50,000 such Negroes who were willing to substitute tired feet for tired souls, and walking the streets of Montgomery until the walls of segregation were finally battered by the forces of justice."

**The March on Washington — 1963**

The success of the Montgomery bus boycott boosted Martin Luther King Jr. to instant fame, and he soon became regarded as the leader of the civil rights movement. He began working with other civil rights leaders to make the movement a national one and to pass a law ending racial discrimination.

King and others staged a march on Washington, D.C. On Aug. 28, 1963, more than 200,000 people — blacks and whites
In most democracies, civil rights are protected by law. In America, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution describe the basic civil rights of all U.S. citizens. They are called the Bill of Rights.

— marched to the Lincoln Memorial in an appeal for racial equality. The high point of the march was a speech by King, who told the crowd that he had a dream that one day all people would enjoy equality and justice. The speech, titled, “I Have a Dream,” is one of the most famous speeches of all time.

Soon after, President John F. Kennedy Jr. proposed laws designed to protect the civil rights of all people, despite much opposition, especially in the South. After Kennedy’s assassination, President Lyndon B. Johnson persuaded Congress to pass the proposed laws, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was enacted. It was the strongest civil rights bill in U.S. history, outlawing racial discrimination in public places and demanding equal opportunity for all people.

1. How do you use your civil rights every day? What are you able to do because you have these rights? If your rights were denied, how would your life be different? Discuss in small groups.

2. Look up and read Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech. Then imagine you are a newspaper reporter covering the speech. Write a story describing the speech and reaction to it. Do you think his dream has come true? Discuss with your classmates.

3. Many civil rights acts have been passed since Reconstruction. In teams, find out which acts have been passed and what rights they guarantee. Choose one and write a news article that might have appeared when it was passed. Remember the five W’s.

4. Throughout this study, watch your newspaper for news about someone whose rights have been denied. For each example, identify the right denied and the effect. Be prepared to share one example with the class.

The Bill of Rights, as this parchment copy is now known, is on permanent display in the Rotunda of the National Archives.
14: Pride in Color

A Culture’s Influence

**The Harlem Renaissance**

During early 1900s, it seemed as if African-Americans would forever be treated as second-class citizens. The arts, however, proved to be a great equalizer — at least for a while.

A growing interest in the black experience in the 1920s gave African-Americans the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and abilities. The resulting outpouring of literary work, art, and music, mostly from writers and artists in New York City’s Harlem community, became known as the Harlem Renaissance.

Drawing on their experiences, writers such as James Weldon Johnson, Langston Hughes, Nella Larson, and others penned extraordinary works that both blacks and whites were eager to read. Black musicians, such as W.C. Handy, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong, likewise rode to great fame on their immense talent.

The Harlem Renaissance was short-lived, however, as the white publishers and readers who fed the movement lost interest in the African-American experience and became engulfed instead in the hardships of the Great Depression. But it forever changed the perception of the African-American culture and ensured that African-Americans’ talents and abilities would no longer go untapped.

**Kwanzaa: An African-American Holiday**

Kwanzaa is an African-American holiday based on the traditional African festival of the first crops. It begins the day after Christmas and lasts for seven days. Kwanzaa means first fruits in Swahili, an East African language.


The holiday centers on the Nguzo Saba, seven principles of black culture developed by Karenga. These principles are:

- **Umoja** (unity)
- **Kujichagulia** (self-determination)
- **Ujima** (collective work and responsibility)
- **Ujamaa** (cooperative economics)
- **Nia** (purpose)
- **Kuumba** (creativity)
- **Imani** (faith)

Each evening during Kwanzaa, family members light one of the seven candles in a kinara (candleholder), discuss the principle for that day, and sometimes exchange small gifts. Near the end of the holiday, the community gathers for karamu — a feast of traditional African food.

**B.B. (Riley B.) King** is a rhythm-and-blues legend. The initials B.B. stand for “Blues Boy,” a nickname he acquired early in his career. He also has a nickname for his guitar. He calls her “Lucille.”

**IN SPITE OF OPPRESSION,** in spite of discrimination, in spite of struggle, African-Americans have made enormous contributions to U.S. society throughout the years. Whether in politics, on the playing field, in literature, or on the stage, those contributions have helped make this country what it is today.

One area in which African-Americans have had tremendous influence is music — from the rhythm and harmonies of jazz to the booming beat of modern rap. This influence can be traced to Africa and a time long before Africans were captured and brought to the American colonies as slaves. Historically, music has been a large part of the African lifestyle, particularly during ceremonies and festivals.

**Slave songs** — In the days of slavery, music was a part of everyday life. Slaves sang while working in the fields, while sitting outside their cabins at night, and during worship services.

Some slaves worked hard to save enough money to purchase musical instruments. A fiddle was the instrument of choice for many. Those who couldn’t afford store-bought instruments made their own or sang a capella (without music).

Often, when a master was having company, he would call in his most musically talented slave to play an instrument for his guests’ enjoyment.

**Spirituals** — African-Americans...
are credited with transforming the traditional Christian hymn into what is called the spiritual. The change came about because slaves weren’t allowed to sing their native African songs in the Colonies. As a result, Christian hymns were modified to reflect the harmony of African music and to express hope in overcoming oppression.

Although created years earlier, the spiritual was often heard in the first African-American denominational churches established about 1787.

**Jazz** — The important musical forerunners of jazz were two popular types of music: ragtime and blues. Jazz, which first became popular around 1900 among African-Americans in the South, combines African rhythm with Western harmony.

The earliest jazz was performed by African-Americans who had little — if any — training but drew on their strong musical heritage. Among the first popular jazz musicians was an African-American named Louis Armstrong. Armstrong, better known as Satchmo, was famous for his improvisational trumpet solos.

Ella Fitzgerald is one of the all-time great jazz singers in history. Her first big hit was “A Tisket A Tasket.”

**Rap** — The African influence in rap music is evident in its rhythmic beat. Rap songs are usually chanted rather than sung and often carry a political or social message. This type of music became popular in the 1980s — some say it replaced rock as the creative force in the ‘80s as well as the ‘90s — and has catapulted many artists to fame.

### Activities

1. Find and clip stories, photos, and other information from the newspaper that illustrate African-American contributions to our society. Discuss what life would be like without these important contributions.

2. African-Americans played an important role in the development of theater, cinema, dance, art, and literature. Do research to find out about one person in each of these fields. Look through your newspaper for an African-American who is famous today for his or her role in the arts. Share your example with the class.

3. Try your hand at writing a rap song. Find an issue covered in the newspaper, then write a rap song that includes your thoughts about the issue.

4. African-Americans have also made an enormous contribution in sports. Look through your newspaper for an African-American sports figure that you admire. What character traits — on the playing field and off — do you admire? Discuss.

### To learn more about the African-American experience, check out these books:

**Nonfiction**
- The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words by Milton Meltzer
- Now is Your Time! The African-American Struggle for Freedom by Walter Dean Myers
- I Have a Dream by Margaret Davidson
- Meet Martin Luther King Jr. by James T. De Kay
- The Afro-Americans by Howard Smead
- Rosa Parks by Eloise Greenfield
- There is a River by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
- Before the Mayflower by Lerone J. Bennett Jr.
- Labor of Love, Labor and Sorrow by Jacqueline J. Sones
- The Greatest: My Own Story by Muhammad Ali and Richard Durham
- Great Black Americans by Ben Richardson and W.A. Fahey

**Poetry**
- Daydreamers by Eloise Greenfield
- Bronzeville Boys and Girls by Gwendolyn Brooks

**Fiction**
- The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats
- The Black Snowman by Phil Mendez
- The Shimmershine Queens by Camille Yarbrough
- Your Friend Annie by Carole Katchen