

## An African American Timeline

The ancestors of all African-Americans came from Africa directly or indirectly. The vast Continent of Africa has a human history that dates back one million years.

The people are from hundreds of tribes and speak many languages. This timeline shows just a few notable periods relevant to African Americans and their ancestors.

### **1 million years ago**

Humans lived in the Great Rift Valley of Africa.

### **4,000 years ago**

Egyptians began using drawings to tell stories.

### **2400 years ago**

Egyptian tomb paintings recorded the distinct Berber culture. (Many centuries later, a Tuareg Berber became the first recorded victim of the transatlantic slave trade.)

### **622 years ago**

Muhammad fled to Medina from Mecca marking the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

### **1476**

Christopher Columbus set off to Africa.

### **1510**

Spain began the slave trade.

### **1522**

The first revolt of slaves broke out in Spain.

### **1619**

Twenty Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, becoming the first slaves in North America.

### **1704**

A church school for slaves opened in New York.

### **1775**

African Americans fought in the first battles of the American Revolution. The first abolitionist society in America was formed.

### **1777**

Vermont became the first colony to abolish slavery.

### **1783**

The Massachusetts Supreme Court abolished slavery. Freedom was granted to slaves in Virginia who fought in the American Revolution. Maryland prohibited slave transport.

**1827**

The first African American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, was published.

**1839**

Fifty-four slaves revolted aboard the Amistad ship. They were captured but later set free by an order of the U.S. Supreme Court.

**1854**

The first African American college, Lincoln University, was established in Pennsylvania.

**1863**

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves in states that had withdrawn from the Union.

**1865**

The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, abolishing slavery in the U.S. The 55<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts African American Infantry liberated Charleston, South Carolina.

**1868**

John W. Menard became the first African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Louisiana. Congress did not seat Menard.

**1870**

The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, giving African Americans the right to vote. Hiram Revels from Mississippi was the first African American to sit in the U.S. Senate.

**1877**

Henry O. Flipper became the first African American to graduate from West Point Military Academy.

**1900**

Congressman George Henry White introduced an anti-lynching bill in the U.S. Congress.

**1909**

The NAACP was founded.

**1926**

Carter G. Woodson founded the Negro Society for Historical Research.

**1939**

Jane Matilda Bolin became the first African American woman judge. She presided over the Domestic Relations Court of the City of New York

**1944**

The United Negro College fund was established.

**1949**

New Jersey was the first state to end segregation in public accommodations.

**1950**

Gwendolyn Brooks became the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize. She won the prize for a volume of poetry entitled *Annie Allen*.

**1955**

The Montgomery Bus Boycott began when Rosa Parks refused to take a seat in the back of a bus.

**1957**

Nine children integrated a school in Little Rock, Arkansas.

**1958**

Ten thousand students attended the Youth March for Integrated Schools in Washington, D.C.

**1961**

James B. Parsons became the first African American federal judge appointed in the country; he was appointed to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Thurgood Marshall became the first African American federal appellate court judge. He served on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. President John F. Kennedy appointed both judges.

**1963**

An estimated 250,000 people participated in the March on Washington, D.C. This was the largest demonstration for civil rights in history.

**1964**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. won the Nobel Peace Prize. The U.S. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**1967**

Carl B. Stokes became the first African American mayor of a major city (Cleveland, Ohio).

**1968**

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.

**1971**

Samuel Lee Gravely, Jr. became the first African American admiral in the U.S. Navy.

**1976**

Andrew Young is appointed Chief Delegate to the United Nations by President Jimmy Carter.

**1977**

One hundred-thirty million people viewed the television production of *Roots*. The movie based on a novel by Alex Haley, portraying his family's abduction from Africa and triumph over slavery in America.

**1983**

Lt. Col. Guion S. Bluford, Jr. became the first African American astronaut in space. Michael Jackson sold 40 million copies of his *Thriller* album.

**1984**

The Bill Cosby show premiered on NBC-TV.

**1986**

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday became a national holiday in the United States.

**1987**

Toni Morrison won a Pulitzer Prize for her novel, *Beloved*.

**1991**

The U.S. Congress passed the 1991 Civil Rights Act. This Act reinforced the Civil Rights Act of 1964, making employers accountable for practices that adversely impacted minorities. Thurgood Marshall retires from the Supreme Court and Clarence Thomas is appointed to take his place.

**1996**

Voters in California passed proposition 209 ending affirmative action in government activities.

**1998**

Texaco settled a class action discrimination suit with their African American employees.

**1999**

USDA settled a multimillion-dollar class action discrimination suit with African American farmers.

**2000**

Venus and Serna Williams won the Wimbledon Doubles Championship.

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