

African American Cultural Items

Introduction

African American culture is vast. It includes various traditions and genres in literature, music, dance, art, spirituality, folktales, symbolism, politics, and values. This section of the sourcebook provides a few items that are significant by themselves but are minute in comparison to the rich multiplicity of African American culture. The Black National Anthem was composed and written by James Weldon Johnson and his brother J. Rosamond Johnson. It is often sung at African American heritage celebrations and at graduation ceremonies at historically Black colleges and universities. The poem “Phenomenal Woman” is an often-read stanza of Maya Angelo’s poem, *Still I Rise*. It speaks to the strength and pride of African American women. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, given on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., is familiar to many school children today. It is often read at ceremonies commemorating his birthday, as well as at African American heritage events. It speaks of the problems in the black community at the time it was written and to King’s vision and hope for a better future. President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation is the document that set forth slaves’ right to be freed from slavery. Finally, a list of African American holidays is provided.