

HOW TO START FINDING YOUR ANCESTORS AFRICAN AMERICAN GENEALOGY

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Points to consider

Before you get started

- Always consider name variations – spelling doesn't matter
- Don't assume your ancestors were enslaved
- Before trying to find enslaved ancestors, complete family research from present back to 1870
- The former enslaved did not always take their slaveholder's surnames
- All records are not online
- Take a "time out" to deal with harsh facts

Key Steps to African

American Genealogy:

- Document what you know; start with yourself; work backwards
- Identify gaps in your known information
- Develop a research plan to answer the research question
- Conduct research and gather documents
- Analyze the record obtained and extract pertinent info to answer question
- Surmise the answer to research question and summarize your findings

Organization Setup:

- Choose Paper-form or Digital system
- Organize documents by –
 - Surname or Family Group
 - Location
 - Document Type

Genealogy Tools:

- Pedigree Chart
- Family Group Sheet
- Genealogy Software
 - Legacy Family Tree (<https://legacyfamilytree.com/>)
 - Roots Magic Essentials (<https://www.rootsmagic.com/Essentials/>)
 - Family Tree Maker <https://www.mackiev.com/ftm/>
- Personal Databases
- Notebook
- Note-taking apps
 - OneNote
 - Evernote
- Recording devices

Getting started in African American Genealogy

Selected References

Online resources

Afrigeneas <http://www.afrigeneas.com/>

Afrigeneas research guide <https://www.afrigeneas.com/guide/>

Familysearch – African Amer.

https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Genealogy

Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.com>

The International African American Museum Center for Family History

<https://cfh.iaamuseum.org/>

Cyndi's List African American Resources <https://www.cyndislist.com/african-american>

Freedmen's Bureau [The Freedmen's Bureau Online](#)

Mapping the Freedmen's Bureau [Mapping The Freedmen's Bureau Interactive Guide](#)

Digital Library on American Slavery

<https://www.genealogycenter.info/africanamerican/>

Beyond Kin project <https://beyondkin.org/>

Low Country Africana <https://lowcountryafricana.com/>

Digital Library on American Slavery <https://library.uncg.edu/slavery/>

HistoryHub <https://historyhub.history.gov/welcome>

National Archives <https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans#toc-online-resources>

Familysearch African American Reading list [African American For Further Reading](#)

Black Past Genealogy Page blackpast.org//african-american-history-genealogy/

The Legal Genealogist www.thelegalgenealogist.com

Census records details <https://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/cff-2.pdf>

Institute

Midwest African American Genealogy Institute <http://www.maagiinstitute.org/>

Forms/Charts

- https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Genealogy_Research_Forms
- <https://www.mymcpl.org/genealogy/resources/family-history-forms>
- <https://www.thoughtco.com/filling-out-genealogical-forms-1421955>
- <https://www.cyndislist.com/charts/research/>
- <http://misbach.org/free-pdf-charts.html>
- <https://reclaimingkin.com/product-category/genealogy-forms/>

Interview questions for Genealogy

- <https://www.thoughtco.com/fifty-questions-for-family-history-interviews-1420705>
- <https://familyhistorydaily.com/free-genealogy-resources/family-history-interview-questions/>
- <https://artoffamilyhistory.com/researching/genealogy-interview-yourself/>

Newspapers

- Chronicling America <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>
- Genealogybank Genealogybank.com
- Newspaper Archive newspaperarchive.com
- Newspapers Newspapers.com

Military

- Blacks Military-NARA <https://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/military/blacks-in-military.html>
- fold3.com https://go.fold3.com/blackhistory_wars
- Civil War Soldiers and Sailors Database <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>

Selected Books

Collier, Melvin J. 150 Years Later: Broken Ties Mended. Alexandria, VA: Write Here Publishing, 2011.

Collier, Melvin J. Mississippi to Africa: A Journey of Discovery 2nd edition. Alexandria, VA: Write Here Publishing, 2011.

Smith, Robyn. The Best of Reclaiming Kin: Helpful Tips On Researching Your Roots. Self Published. 2016.

Woodtor, Dee Parmer. Finding A Place Called Home, A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity. New York: Random House, 1999.

Berry, Kenyatta D. The Family Tree Toolkit. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2018

Bettinger, Blaine T. The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy 2nd edition. Cincinnati, Ohio: Family Tree Books, 2020.

Hoffman Rushing, Marsha. The Family Tree Problem Solver 3rd edition. 2019

Smith, Drew. Organize Your Genealogy Strategies and Solutions for Every Researcher. 2016

Smith, Franklin and Croom, Emily. Discovering Your African-American Ancestor. Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 2003.

Blogs

<http://african-nativeamerican.blogspot.com/>
[Into The Light](#)

<https://rootsrevealed.blogspot.com/>

<https://findingeliza.com/>

<https://reclaimingkin.com/>

<https://www.whoisnickasmith.com/> (not just a blog)

Videos/Podcasts/Webinars

<https://www.archives.gov/calendar/genealogy-fair>

<https://www.whoisnickasmith.com/blackprogen/>

www.FamilyTreeWebinars.com

<https://www.blogtalkradio.com/bernicebennett>

<http://www.genealogyquickstart.com/about.html>

<https://genealogyadventures.net/>

Societies

[Afro American Historical and Genealogical Society](#)

[SONS & DAUGHTERS OF THE UNITED STATES MIDDLE PASSAGE](#)

[African American Genealogical Society of Northern California \(AAGSNC\)](#)

[Afro-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago](#)

African American Funeral Programs Databases

https://dlg.usg.edu/collection/aarl_afpc

<https://collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/acfp>

<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1880968>

<https://cdm17006.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17006coll8>

DNA

- **Autosomal DNA (aTDNA)** identifies both maternal and paternal relatives back up to 5-8 generations. Best to test to discover living relatives. (Example AncestryDNA, 23andMe)
- **Y-DNA** can only be used by men and it identifies male relatives on the paternal line back 25+ generations. Traces a single ancestral line. (Example – African Ancestry, FamilyTreeDNA)
- **Mitochondrial DNA (mTDNA)** identifies female relatives on the maternal line back 25+ generations; both men and women can take this type of test. Traces a single ancestral line. (Example – African Ancestry, FamilyTreeDNA)