

The Untold History of Negro Americans: From Indigenous Roots to Misclassification

This presentation explores the complex and often overlooked history of Negro Americans, tracing their roots as indigenous peoples of the Americas through centuries of colonization, enslavement, and systematic erasure of their true identity. We will examine historical evidence, legal documents, and demographic data that challenge conventional narratives about the origins and classification of African Americans. This journey through time reveals a story of resilience, cultural preservation, and the ongoing struggle for recognition and rights.

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Pre-Colonial Evidence of Negro Presence in the Americas

1

12,000 BCE

Discovery of Negroid mummies in the Grand Canyon, Nevada, as reported by the Smithsonian Institute. This finding suggests a much earlier presence of dark-skinned peoples in the Americas than previously acknowledged.

2

5000 BCE

Evidence of African seafaring to the Americas, predating Asian migrations. This challenges the conventional narrative of indigenous American origins.

3

1213 BCE

Autopsy of Ramses II reveals residue of American tobacco and South American coca leaves, indicating trade or travel between Africa and the Americas.

4

1312 CE

Mali's Abubakari II leads an expedition of 2000 ships to the Americas, continuing a tradition of African-American contact.

Early Colonial Period: Recognition of Negro Indigeneity

Captain John Smith's Account

In 1607, Captain John Smith reported being captured by Black Indians in Virginia, providing one of the earliest European accounts of dark-skinned indigenous peoples in North America.

Pre-Slavery Integration

Before the establishment of chattel slavery, Negroes in colonial America often lived in common with other inhabitants, suggesting a level of integration and recognition of their indigenous status.

Legal Recognition

Early colonial laws and records frequently referred to "Negro" inhabitants without necessarily implying enslaved status, indicating a more complex social structure than later racial categories would suggest.

The Shift Towards Enslavement: 1640-1700

1

1640

Evidence suggests Negroes becoming enslaved in tobacco colonies like Virginia, Delaware, and Maryland, marking the beginning of a shift in social status.

2

1662

Virginia passes an anti-miscegenation law, signaling increasing racial segregation and the erosion of Negro rights.

3

1680

Slave population begins to increase significantly, rising from 4.6% to over 20% by 1750, without significant transatlantic slave trade involvement.

4

1700

Negroes are now commonly treated as chattel slaves, marking a stark change from their earlier status in colonial society.





Legal Codification of Racial Categories: 1700-1750

1

Slave Codes Enacted

Southern colonies begin enacting slave codes in 1705, formalizing the legal status of enslaved Negroes and restricting their rights.

2

Racial Definitions Emerge

The 1705 Virginia Assembly act provides the first legal definition of a "mulatto," categorizing individuals based on ancestry and setting a precedent for racial classification.

3

Disenfranchisement Spreads

Between 1723 and 1762, various colonies including Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia disenfranchise Negroes, stripping them of voting rights and other citizenship privileges.

4

Anti-Miscegenation Laws Proliferate

States like North Carolina (1715) and South Carolina (1717) adopt anti-miscegenation laws, further solidifying racial boundaries and limiting Negro rights.



The American Revolution and Its Aftermath: 1775-1800

1

Negro Participation in Revolution

Approximately 5,000 Negro soldiers participate in the American Revolution, fighting for independence despite their own lack of freedom.

2

Constitutional Exclusion

The U.S. Constitution of 1788 specifically excludes Indian nations from the American political system, classifying them as foreign nations.

3

Citizenship Restrictions

The Naturalization Act of 1790 restricts American citizenship to "free white persons," explicitly excluding Negroes and other non-white individuals.

4

Colonization Campaigns

A national campaign from 1790 through 1800 is waged to racially cleanse the United States of Negroes, particularly targeting Virginia which contains 40% of all Negro population.



The Rise of Scientific Racism: 1758-1850

Year	Event	Impact
1758	Carl Linnaeus develops racial classification system	Establishes "scientific" basis for racial hierarchy
1787	Thomas Jefferson publishes Notes on State of Virginia	Promotes ideas of Negro intellectual inferiority
1830s-1840s	Development of craniometry and phrenology	Used to justify racial differences and hierarchies
1850s	Polygenism gains popularity among scientists	Argues for separate origins of races, further entrenching racial divisions



Legislating Identity: Anti-Miscegenation Laws and Racial Classifications

Expanding Anti-Miscegenation Laws

Between 1800 and 1850, numerous states including Delaware, Missouri, and Indiana pass or strengthen laws prohibiting interracial marriages, further solidifying racial boundaries.

Racial Integrity Acts

Virginia's 1924 Racial Integrity Act becomes a model for other states, dividing society into only two classifications: white and colored, erasing nuanced racial identities.

One-Drop Rule

Tennessee initiates the "One Drop Rule" in 1910, defining as "colored" any person with any African or Native American ancestry, a practice that spreads throughout the country.

Legal Challenges

Cases like *Hudgins v. Wright* (1806) highlight the complexities and inconsistencies in racial classification, as courts struggle to define race in legal terms.

The Indian Removal Act and Its Impact on Negro Indians

1

1830

Indian Removal Act passed, broadening the United States' agenda of ethnic cleansing and genocide of aboriginal people, including many Negro Indians.

2

1831-1838

Forced removal of Cherokee, Muscogee, Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations from the Southeastern U.S., including many individuals of mixed African and Native American ancestry.

3

1850s

Continued displacement and relocation of Native American tribes, further dispersing Negro Indian populations and complicating racial identities.

4

1887

Dawes Act further fragments tribal lands and identities, impacting Negro Indians' connection to their indigenous heritage.



The Civil War and Reconstruction: Shifting Identities

Emancipation and Identity

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and subsequent 13th Amendment in 1865 free enslaved Negroes, prompting questions about their place in American society and their connection to indigenous heritage.

Citizenship Rights

The 14th Amendment in 1868 grants citizenship to all persons born in the U.S., including former slaves, but its implementation varies widely and often excludes those still identified as "Indian."

Racial Reclassification

Post-war census and legal documents often reclassify formerly enslaved individuals, sometimes erasing or obscuring their Native American ancestry in favor of a simplified "Black" or "Negro" categorization.

The Era of Jim Crow and Racial Segregation

1

1870s-1890s

Jim Crow laws are enacted across Southern states, enforcing racial segregation and disenfranchisement of Negroes, including those with indigenous ancestry.

2

1896

Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision upholds "separate but equal" doctrine, further entrenching racial segregation and classification.

3

Early 1900s

Increased enforcement of racial classifications leads to further erasure of Negro Indian identities, as individuals are forced into a binary racial system.

4

1920s-1930s

The Racial Integrity Act and similar laws in other states solidify strict racial categories, making it nearly impossible for individuals to claim both African and Native American heritage.





The Role of Census Classifications in Identity Erasure

Year	Census Classification	Impact on Negro Indians
1790	Free white males, free white females, all other free persons, slaves	Many Negro Indians likely classified as "other free persons" or "slaves"
1850	White, Black, Mulatto	Increased racial categorization, some Negro Indians classified as "Mulatto"
1890	White, Black, Mulatto, Quadroon, Octoroon, Indian	More nuanced but still problematic classifications for mixed-race individuals
1930	White, Negro, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Hindu, Korean	Many Negro Indians forced into "Negro" category, erasing indigenous identity
1960	White, Negro, American Indian, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Hawaiian, Part Hawaiian, Aleut, Eskimo	Continued erasure of mixed Negro-Indian identities

The Civil Rights Movement and Racial Identity

1

Unified Struggle

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s brings together various racial and ethnic groups, including some Negro Indians, in a unified struggle for equality.

2

Legal Victories

Landmark cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 challenge racial segregation and discrimination, but often within the existing racial classification system.

3

Identity Politics

The rise of Black Power and American Indian Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s sometimes creates tension for individuals with both African and Native American heritage.

4

Ongoing Classification Issues

Despite progress in civil rights, official racial classifications continue to pose challenges for Negro Indians seeking recognition of their complex heritage.



The Impact of DNA Testing on Racial and Ethnic Identity

Scientific Advancements

The rise of consumer DNA testing in the 21st century allows individuals to explore their genetic ancestry, often revealing complex racial and ethnic backgrounds that challenge traditional classifications.

Identity Reclamation

Many African Americans, including those with Native American ancestry, use DNA testing to reconnect with their indigenous roots and challenge historical misclassifications.

Legal and Social Implications

DNA evidence of Native American ancestry raises questions about tribal membership, federal recognition, and the legal definitions of race and ethnicity that have long shaped American society.

Contemporary Challenges in Racial Classification

Multiracial Identity

The growing recognition of multiracial identities challenges the historical binary racial system, but still struggles to fully acknowledge complex ancestries like those of Negro Indians.

Federal Recognition

Many groups with both African and Native American heritage struggle for federal recognition as tribes, facing bureaucratic hurdles and historical misclassifications.

Census Changes

Recent changes to census racial categories allow for multiple race selections, but still fail to capture the nuanced history of groups like Negro Indians.

Cultural Preservation

Communities with mixed African and Native American heritage work to preserve their unique cultural practices and histories in the face of continued misclassification and lack of recognition.





Legal Battles for Recognition and Reclassification

1

1970S-1980S

Various lawsuits challenge tribal membership criteria and federal recognition processes, highlighting the complexities of Negro Indian identity.

2

1990S

Increased activism and legal challenges by groups like the Ramapough Lenape Nation and the Lumbee Tribe bring attention to the issue of Negro Indian recognition.

3

2000S

Ongoing legal battles and lobbying efforts seek to address historical misclassifications and gain federal recognition for Negro Indian communities.

4

Present Day

Continued legal and political efforts to reform tribal recognition processes and address the legacy of racial misclassification in federal policy.

The Role of Academia in Reexamining Negro Indian History

Revisionist Histories

Scholars like Dr. David Imhotep challenge conventional narratives about the origins of African Americans, presenting evidence of long-standing Negro presence in the Americas.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

Collaboration between historians, anthropologists, geneticists, and other researchers provides a more comprehensive understanding of Negro Indian history and identity.

Community Partnerships

Increased collaboration between academics and Negro Indian communities leads to more nuanced and accurate representations of their history and culture in scholarly works.

Cultural Resurgence and Identity Reclamation



Intergenerational Knowledge Transfer

Negro Indian communities work to preserve and pass down traditional knowledge, customs, and practices to younger generations, reinforcing cultural identity.



Spiritual and Cultural Practices

Revitalization of spiritual and cultural practices that blend African and Native American traditions, asserting a unique Negro Indian identity.



Artistic Expression

Negro Indian artists, writers, and musicians create works that explore and celebrate their complex heritage, contributing to a broader cultural renaissance.



The Future of Racial Classification and Negro Indian Identity

1

Evolving Classifications

Potential future changes to racial classification systems that better reflect the complexity of Negro Indian and other mixed-race identities.

2

Legal Reforms

Possible reforms to tribal recognition processes and other legal frameworks to address historical injustices and misclassifications.

3

Cultural Shift

Growing societal recognition and acceptance of complex racial and ethnic identities, including Negro Indian heritage.

4

Global Context

Increased understanding of Negro Indian identity within the broader context of global indigenous and African diaspora movements.



Conclusion: Reclaiming Negro Indian Heritage and Identity

1

Historical Acknowledgment

Recognizing the complex history of Negro Indians and the systematic erasure of their identity is crucial for addressing past injustices and shaping a more inclusive future.

2

Legal and Policy Changes

Continued efforts to reform racial classification systems and tribal recognition processes are necessary to fully acknowledge and support Negro Indian communities.

3

Cultural Preservation

Supporting efforts to preserve and revitalize Negro Indian cultural practices, languages, and traditions is essential for maintaining this unique heritage.

4

Education and Awareness

Increasing public understanding of Negro Indian history and identity through education, media representation, and cultural exchange can help combat stereotypes and promote recognition.