

Walter Williams essays, answering questions posed at quora.com

[Why does my DNA say I am 9 percent Native American? I am black and I only know one grandparent, but my mother's people are from Louisiana and my father's from Mississippi.](https://www.quora.com/Why-does-my-DNA-say-I-am-9-percent-Native-American-I-am-black-and-I-only-know-one-grandparent-but-my-mother-s-people-are-from-Louisiana-and-my-father-s-from-Mississippi)

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Indigenous Americans were living in the Americas for many thousands of years before the Europeans came. The Spanish and Portuguese, and later the French, Dutch and English, all started enslaving these Native people, forcing them to labor in mining and agriculture. Spaniards used force to make Native workers mine silver and gold in Bolivia, Peru, and Mexico. Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English forced Natives to raise rice, indigo, corn, and other crops. The Native people had very few diseases, and thus had no immunity to all the new diseases that the Europeans brought with them. The Europeans had no understanding that many diseases are caused by microbes, and as they saw the Natives dying in large numbers they claimed that God was killing them because they did not believe in Christianity.

Because so many Natives were dying from the new diseases, as well as from warfare and massacres, the Europeans had to look for other sources of labor. The Portuguese were the first to turn to West Africa as their labor source, and they brought more Africans as slaves than any other colonialists. More slaves were brought to Portuguese Brazil than to any other country.

The second largest number of Africans who were captured and packed onto slave ships, were sent to Spanish, Dutch, English, and French colonies in the Caribbean Islands. There they were forced to labor on sugarcane plantations. Working with sugarcane is particularly hard work, and the average lifespan of an African slave in the Caribbean was only seven years. They were literally worked to death. The slaveowners did not care, because they could sell the sugar at such a high profit that they could easily purchase more slaves. The most profitable colony in the Americas was the French colony that is today Haiti. The French exploited the African slaves so severely that this small island produced fabulous wealth for the French slaveowners. Some of those Frenchmen migrated to Louisiana, and developed sugar plantations there. As in the Caribbean, processing sugarcane was brutal work, and the death rate for slaves was very high.

The Dutch also developed plantations, and they were prominent in the African slave trade. In 1619, Dutch slave traders sold some African captives to British settlers in the colony of Virginia. They were put to work growing tobacco, which was also very profitable for the landowners. The British settlers started expanding their lands, and the Native Americans resisted. The British

responded by capturing large numbers of Natives and forcing them to work on their tobacco plantations as well. The labor force was both African and Indigenous American.

The British also developed slave plantations growing sugar in Barbados and other Caribbean Islands. As they expanded over all the small islands, they needed more land. A group of English settlers from Barbados migrated to the British colony of South Carolina, bringing African slaves with them. As they expanded, they came into conflict with the Indigenous people of that area, and they captured and enslaved many of them.

Therefore, in both Virginia (which expanded tobacco plantations into eastern North Carolina) and in South Carolina (which grew mostly rice and indigo), the slave population was both African and Indigenous American. Over time, many of these enslaved people had sex with each other. Especially in South Carolina, there was a high rate of interbreeding with the two groups.

Virginia and South Carolina became the two colonies where slavery was most entrenched, and as new lands were taken from the Indigenous nations, the Virginians and Carolina slaveowners made much of their profits from selling their young slaves to whites who settled in Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Florida, Tennessee and Kentucky.

If your ancestors came from Mississippi and Louisiana, it is quite likely that their ancestors were from South Carolina or Virginia. Thus, it is not surprising that you would have some Native American ancestry. In fact, people today who identify as African American have higher rates of Indigenous ancestry than any other group of Americans.

This fact should not be a cause for arguments about who is Native or who is not. The historical reality is that today's African Americans are a product of a brutal slave system that threw together two groups of people, and mistreated all of them. I taught Native American history for many years, at five universities. If you do not believe me, look at the historical sources and you will see that what I have said here is correct.