

Timeline of African American History from 1619 to 1870

- 1619** First African slaves arrive in the Virginia colony of Jamestown.
- 1775** First Abolitionist Society forms in Philadelphia.
- 1778** Rhode Island Regiment, a group of black and Native American soldiers, fights off a British attack during the Revolutionary War.
- 1787** US Constitution is ratified.
- 1790** 697,624 slaves in the US. US Census Data.
- 1793** Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 is passed, giving slaveholders rights to retrieve and return runaway slaves.
- Cotton gin is invented, increasing the desire for free slave labor.
- 1800** 893,602 slaves in the US. US Census Data.
- 1807** Slave trade is abolished in England.
- 1808** Slave trade direct from Africa is abolished in US.
- 1810** 1,191,362 slaves in the US. US Census Data.
- 1820** Missouri Compromise passed making Missouri a slave state and Maine a free state.
- 1,538,022 slaves in the US. US Census Data.
- 1826** US asks Canada to return runaway slaves who had escaped into Canada; Canada refuses.
- North Carolina passes law forbidding free blacks to enter the state.
- 1830** First successful run of a steam-powered locomotive.
- 2,009,043 slaves in the US. US Census Data.
- 1831** Nat Turner Rebellion, a slave revolt that killed approximately sixty white people in and surrounding Southampton County, Virginia. The white Militia responded by executing up to 200 black people, including some who had nothing to do with the rebellion. Fear among slaveholders spread among nearby states.
- The Abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, was published by the NE Antislavery Society.
- Tice Davids, a runaway slave from Kentucky, swims across the Ohio river with his owner in pursuit in a boat. Davids reaches the Ohio shore a few minutes before his owner. The owner cannot find the slave, whereupon he states that the slave "must

have gone off on an underground railroad." This is the beginning of the use of the term Underground Railroad.

1833 A female antislavery committee is formed.

1835 And, continuing for approximately 25 more years, Vigilance committees are formed in many cities in the North to assist those seeking freedom. The committees provided food, clothing, shelter, and sometimes also provided money or jobs.

The newspaper, *The Northern Star and Freeman's Advocate*, is published to assist people of African descent.

1839 Fifty-three slaves, called Mende captives, aboard the Spanish ship, the *Amistad*, revolt, attacks the crew and takes control of the ship. Some, but not all of the crew are killed. The slaves request that they be guided back to Africa. The navigator deceives them and takes the ship to Long Island, New York where a court case later ensues, ending up in the US Supreme Court where the Mende slaves are ordered free.

1840 2,487,355 slaves in the US. US Census Data.

1845 Frederick Douglass publishes his autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, disclosing the mistreatment he endured in Maryland.

1849 Harriet Tubman (Araminta Ross) escapes from slavery. She returns again and again, helping other slaves to flee.

1850 Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 is passed, honoring the rights of slaveholders to capture escaped slaves and return them to the slaveholder's possession.

3,204,313 slaves in the US. US Census Data.

1851 Sojourner Truth delivers a speech called "Ain't I A Woman" at the Women's Right Convention in Akron, Ohio.

1852 Harriet Beecher Stowe publishes an antislavery novel called *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

1853 William Wells Brown, publishes a novel *Clotel*, the first novel published by a black man.

1854 The Kansas-Nebraska Act is passed establishing the territories and allowing each state to decide by popular vote whether it should be a free state or a slave state.

1857 The US Supreme Court, in the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* case, rules that all African-Americans, whether freed or slave, are not citizens of the US.

Vermont abolishes the law which had prohibited African-Americans enlisting in the state army.

Virginia passes a slave code making it illegal to hire slaves. It also restricts the movement of slaves in Richmond.

1859 John Brown, an abolitionist, attempts to stage an armed slave revolt on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, but they were defeated by the US Marines.

1860 Abraham Lincoln is elected President of the United States.

South Carolina secedes from the union, followed by Alabama, Florida, Texas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

3,953,760 slaves in the US. US Census Data.

1861 Confederate forces fire on Fort Sumter, SC, thereby beginning the US Civil War.

1863 President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation abolishing slavery.

1865 The war ends when General Lee surrenders to General Grant at Appomattox, Virginia.

The 13th Amendment passes, abolishing slavery.

1868 The 14th Amendment to the US Constitution is ratified, granting citizenship and its benefits to "all persons born or naturalized in the United States."

1870 The 15th Amendment passes giving African American men the right to vote by declaring that "the right of citizens of the United States shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude."