

FANNIE BARRIER WILLIAMS & THE REFINING INFLUENCE of ART

(1) FBW Biographical Timeline



Village of Brockport, circa 1870. Courtesy of Ebay.com¹

- February 12, 1855: Frances (Fannie) Barrier is born.

Williams is the daughter of wealthy, mixed-race parents in the upstate New York town of **Brockport**, a community with few black residents, where class distinctions rather than color bound her social world. Her parents provide her with a college education that enables her to pursue her passion for art, ultimately leading her to pursue a lifetime of activism.

¹ <https://i.ebayimg.com/images/g/Cu8AAOSw7XZXgnpM/s-l1600.jpg>



19th century Art Class. Courtesy of University of Massachusetts.²

- Circa 1870: Arts Education

Williams studied at Boston's New England Conservatory of Music and then at the School of Fine Arts in Washington, DC, establishing her reputation as a musician and painter. While studying the arts, she is confronted with an intensity of racism she had never suffered in Brockport, surrounded by screens that separated her from the other students.

- 1884: Fannie Barrier Williams's artwork goes on public display in Brockport.

"The beautiful crayon sketches prepared by Miss Fannie Barrier of this village, and exhibited at Messrs. Smith &Pearse's store, have commanded a great deal of admiration."— The Brockport Republic, 8/28/1884. There is no surviving artwork by Fannie Barrier Williams.

² [https://pxl-umassdedu.terminalfour.net/fit-in/1200x800/filters:format\(webp\)/filters:quality\(90\)/prod01/production-cdn-pxl/media/umassdartmouth/office-of-public-affairs/images/makingmark2-1.jpg?text=945+WebP](https://pxl-umassdedu.terminalfour.net/fit-in/1200x800/filters:format(webp)/filters:quality(90)/prod01/production-cdn-pxl/media/umassdartmouth/office-of-public-affairs/images/makingmark2-1.jpg?text=945+WebP)



S. LAING WILLIAMS.

*Photograph portrait of Samuel Laing Williams, 1903. Library of Congress.*³

- **1887: Fannie Barrier Williams marries S. Laing Williams.**

S. Lang graduated with a degree in the arts from the University of Michigan and had a long commitment to this aspect of African-American culture. He organized the Prudence Crandall Club, a literary society named after a white woman from New England who trained free African Americans in a secret school.

³ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/43/Samuel_Laing_Williams%2C_1903.jpg



*Courtesy of Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*⁴

- 1893: **“The Intellectual Progress of the Colored Women of the United States Since the Emancipation Proclamation,”** is presented at the **World’s Columbian Exposition**

Offered at the World’s Congress of Representative Women, Williams states, “In less than another generation, American literature, American art, and American music will be enriched by productions having new and peculiar features of interest and excellence.”

⁴ <https://cdn.britannica.com/67/218767-050-8E656884/Civil-rights-leader-lecturer-Fannie-Barrier-Williams-circa-1885.jpg>



Williams in 1900. Courtesy of the New York Public Library⁵

- July 14, 1904: Williams pens “**A Northern Negro’s Autobiography.**”

Williams's autobiography details her life as a freeborn black woman from the North who had worked as an adult in the South and then returned to the North. Her story strongly contrasts the perspective of the lives of other more typical women of color. The piece introduces Williams to the general public, though it is short on precise details and no archival collection of our papers exists.

⁵ <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/gcdn/presto/2022/02/23/PROC/a623d685-3c44-49a8-a3c8-1f2d3cc6c88a-nypl.digitalcollections.510d47da-70a6-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.001.w.jpg?width=300&height=373&fit=crop&format=pjpg&auto=webp>



Thomas Hovenden, *Breaking Home Ties* (1890). Courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.⁶

- 1906: Williams's "**The Refining Influence of Art**," is published in *The Voice of the Negro*.

Presented in the turn of the century's most significant African-American literary periodical, *The Voice of the Negro*, whose goal is to support the education and social elevation of African Americans within American society. Williams discusses establishing lending libraries for art and advocates selecting art that celebrates the everyday life of blacks. She cites Thomas Hovenden's *Breaking Home Ties* as "the most pathetic incidents of family life" that drew attention and sympathy for the suffering while extolling the virtues of a mother's love and "the sacred influences of a good home." Williams speaks with authority, as she had advanced training in art and hopes art would become a permanent educational influence on African-American culture.

⁶ <https://iif.micr.io/nSGLv/full/%5E1200,/0/default.jpg>

FANNIE BARRIER WILLIAMS

Born in Brockport, N. Y., and married S. Lang Williams. Attended the common schools, Brockport Collegiate Institute, New England Conservatory of Boston, Mass, and the school of Fine Arts, Washington, D. C.

Mrs. Fannie Barrier Williams first came into public notice during the "World's Columbian Exposition." By a surprising display of wit and eloquence she won from the board of Control some recognition of the American Negro in the Exposition.



Courtesy of the Democrat and Chronicle

- March 4th, 1944: The death of Fannie Barrier Williams⁷

The Brockport Republic reports:

The demise of Mrs. Fannie Barrier Williams of Erie Street occurred Saturday at her home after a long illness. About 89 years of age, Mrs. Williams was born in Brockport and after residing in other parts of the country, returned here in 1926. Her father, Anthony J. Barrier, formerly conducted a barber shop in this village. She was educated at the New England Conservatory of Music and the School of Fine Arts in Washington, D. C., in which city she also taught school. Following her marriage to a lawyer, S. Laing Williams, the first negro admitted to the Chicago Bar Association, Mrs. Williams resided for many years in Chicago, where she was active in many organizations. She was a member of the City Library Board and also A life member of the City Club of Chicago. She traveled and lectured extensively and was active in social service work. She is survived by one sister, Miss Ella Barrier of this village; and one niece, Miss Harriett Barrier of Detroit, Mich. Funeral services were conducted Tuesday afternoon at 2 p.m. with burial in Brockport Cemetery. —3/9/1944."

⁷ <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/gcdn/presto/2022/02/23/PROC/b8b0b875-a9f7-48e5-8e01-0f053a7b0850-nypl.digitalcollections.510d47dd-ec0b-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99.001.w.jpg?width=1200&disable=upscale&format=pjpg&auto=webp>

Historical Context Timeline



*Advertisement for Jim Crow Ten Pins, 1890-1910. Courtesy of the New York Historical Society.*⁸

- **1832: Jim Crow Character by Thomas Dartmouth Rice.**

In 1838, Dartmouth Rice began performing his hugely successful song-and-dance act supposedly modeled after an enslaved person and named the character “Jim Crow.” Rice darkened his face, behaved like a buffoon, and spoke with a biased imitation of African American Vernacular English. “Jim Crow” became a generic stage persona for white comedians' blackface depictions of African Americans and was used in advertisements in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The name "Jim Crow" became a shorthand for the laws, and customs that segregated African Americans from the 1870s to the 1960s.

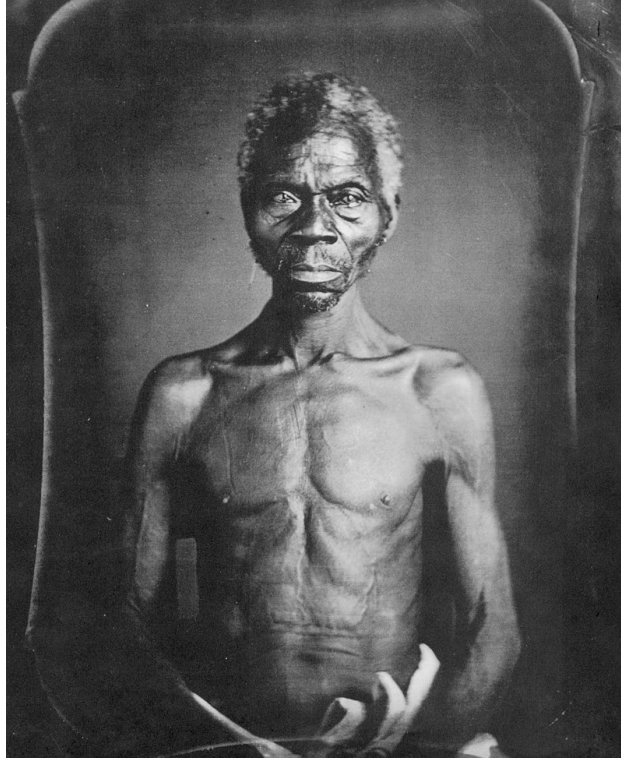
⁸ https://www.nyhistory.org/_next/image?url=https%3A%2F%2Fimages.prismic.io%2Fnyhs-prod%2Freading-into-mockingbird-the-jim-crow-south-3.jpg%3Fauto%3Dcompress%2Cformat%26rect%3D0%2C0%2C800%2C800%26w%3D800%26h%3D800&w=828&q=75



I. Knapp, *Am I not a woman and a sister?* 1837. Courtesy of the New York Public Library.⁹

Visual representations of blackness were created, funded, and otherwise promoted by progressive patrons and organizations that promoted African-American social and cultural equity. This engraving appeared in abolitionist George Bourne's *Slavery Illustrated in Its Effects upon Women*, published in 1837. Enslaved African-American women were particularly vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their white owners. The image highlights the connections between the anti-slavery and women's rights movements, as some women abolitionists use the anti-slavery cause to address their own plight as women. The connections they draw are highly controversial, and many anti-slavery organizations are split over the issue of women's rights.

⁹ <https://images.nypl.org/index.php?id=1231665&t=w>



The label on his photo says: Renty, Congo, on the plantation of B.F. Taylor, Columbia, S.C.¹⁰

- **1850: Renty Taylor Daguerreotype.**

Renty Taylor (c. 1775 - after c. 1866), also known as Renty Thompson or Papa Renty, was an African enslaved man in the 18th and 19th centuries. Born in the Congo Basin, he was one of the subjects of the oldest known slave photos, which were taken in 1850 by Joseph T. Zealy under the direction of Harvard biologist Louis Agassiz, to support the enslavement of Africans in the United States and promote white supremacy. In 2019, Taylor's descendants sued Harvard for the return of the images and unspecified damages, accusing Harvard of capturing this image by force and without the subject's consent.

¹⁰ https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4d/Renty_an_African_slave.jpg/800px-Renty_an_African_slave.jpg

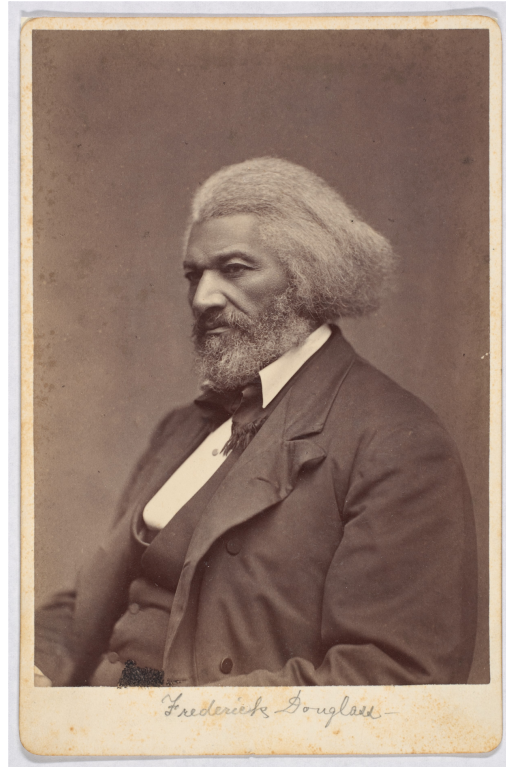


Full-page illustration by Hammatt Billings for Uncle Tom's Cabin, First Edition: Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1852. Courtesy of Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture.

- 1852: **Uncle Tom's Cabin.**¹¹

Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly is an anti-slavery novel by American author Harriet Beecher Stowe. Published in two volumes, the novel has a profound effect on attitudes toward African Americans and slavery in the U.S. and is said to have helped lay the groundwork for the American Civil War.

¹¹ <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/xml/stowe/gallery/figures/utill522.jpg>



Frederick Douglass, circa 1860. Photo by Matthew Brady. Metropolitan Museum of Art. ¹²

- 1860: **"Pictures and Progress" by Frederick Douglass.**

One of the first critical theorists of photography, Douglass's lecture "Pictures and Progress" advocated for photography's potential to counteract distorted representations of African Americans and reverse the "social death" caused by slavery. Douglass posed for a series of influential portraits over the 19th century and circulated his image extensively. Douglass saw photography's value as a social leveler, as it became increasingly affordable to ordinary people by the end of the 19th century. In "Pictures and Progress" Douglass remarked: "The humbled servant girl whose income is but a few shillings per week may now possess a more perfect likeness of herself than noble ladies and court royalty..." He noted that photo studios could be found in even the smallest towns.

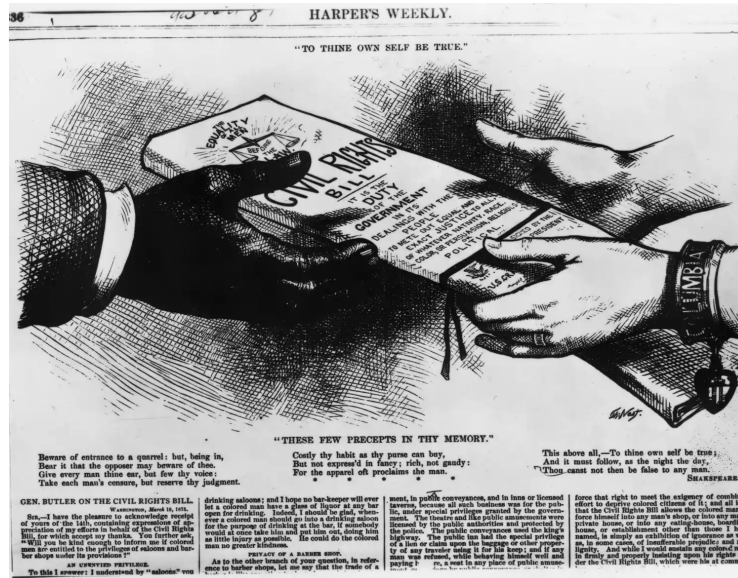
¹² <https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/ph/original/DP254780.jpg>



Courtesy of the Library Company of Philadelphia¹³

- 1861-1865: The American Civil War

During the American Civil War, tens of thousands of enslaved African Americans of all ages escaped Union lines for freedom. Contraband camps were set up in some areas, where blacks started learning to read and write. Others travel with the Union Army. By the end of the war, more than 180,000 African Americans, mostly from the South, fought with the Union Army and Navy as members of the US Colored Troops and sailors.

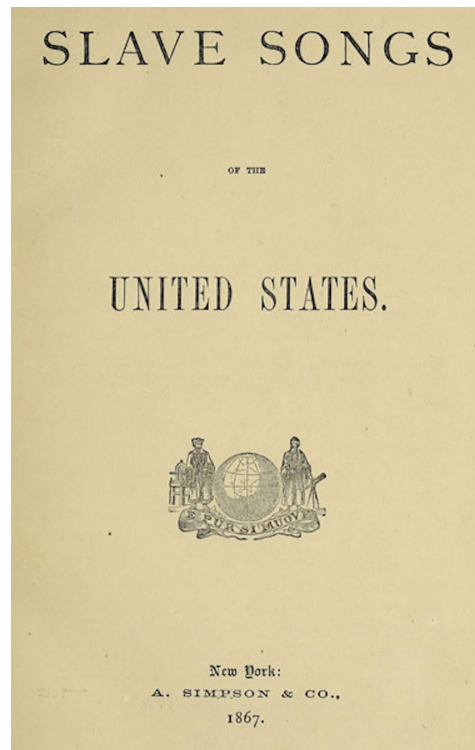


¹³ https://home.nps.gov/guis/images/25th-USCT-recruitment-poster_LibOfPhila.jpg?maxwidth=1200&autorotate=false

*An archival illustration from Harper's Weekly about the Civil Rights Bill. MPI / Getty Images.*¹⁴

- April 9th, 1866: **The Civil Rights Act of 1866**

Passed by Congress over Andrew Johnson's presidential veto, all persons born in the United States are now citizens. Consequently, **the Ku Klux Klan** was formed in Pulaski, Tennessee, made up of white Confederate veterans; it became a paramilitary insurgent group to enforce white supremacy.



*Courtesy of Carnegie Hall Archives.*¹⁵

- **1867: "Slave Songs of the United States" is published.**

The emancipation of the enslaved in 1865 brought about many changes in their lives and music. Their improvised expressions became accessible in written form when white song collectors began transcribing their songs for study. The editors of the first published collection of spirituals and secular songs, *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867), however, acknowledged their inability to capture the improvised

¹⁴[https://www.thoughtco.com/thmb/9VUDTtpkrcDKCcg092nfNKI7vYw=/1500x0/filters:no_upscale\(\):max_bytes\(150000\):strip_icc\(\):format\(webp\)/cra-58b6de495f9b586046478d35.jpg](https://www.thoughtco.com/thmb/9VUDTtpkrcDKCcg092nfNKI7vYw=/1500x0/filters:no_upscale():max_bytes(150000):strip_icc():format(webp)/cra-58b6de495f9b586046478d35.jpg)

¹⁵https://carnegie-hall.imgix.net/c4c983cd-ed2a-4703-841d-abc4e0f81a67/Slave_Songs_of_the_United_States_1867.jpg?auto=format&w=1678

character of these songs on the score. Three decades later, the transcribers of ragtime, the first genre of post-emancipation Black popular music to appear in print, encountered similar challenges.

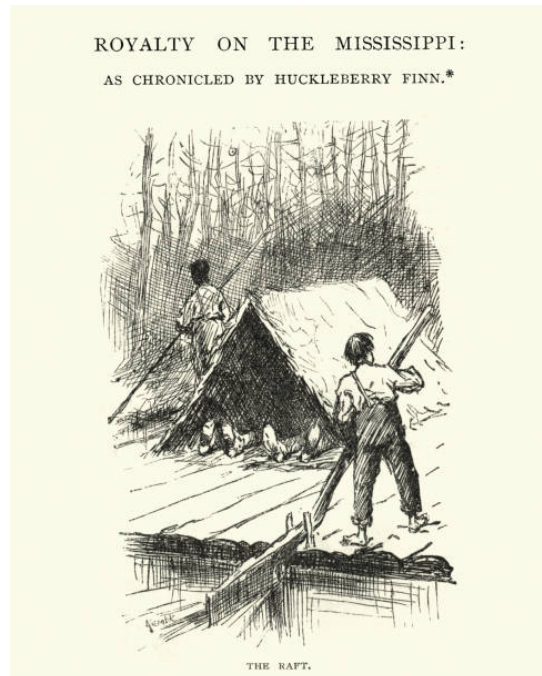


National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. ¹⁶

- **1867: Fisk Jubilee Singers.**

The singers were organized as a fundraising effort for Fisk University. The historically black college in Nashville, Tennessee, was founded by the American Missionary Association and local supporters after the end of the American Civil War to educate freedmen and other young African Americans. The Jubilee Singers' performances were a departure from the familiar "black minstrel" genre of white musicians performing in blackface. One early review of the group's performance was headlined "Negro Minstrelsy in Church--Novel Religious Exercise," while further reviews highlighted the fact that this group of Negro minstrels were, oddly enough, "genuine negroes."

¹⁶ https://ids.si.edu/ids/deliveryService?max_w=800&id=NPG-NPG_2002_92JubileeSingers-000001



Courtesy of istockphoto.com. ¹⁷

- **1884: Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."**

A milestone in American fiction, the novel features the admirable African-American character Jim. Through satire, Twain skewers definitions of "right" and "wrong" in the antebellum South, noting among other things that the "right" thing to do when a slave runs away is to turn him in, not help him escape. Twain also paints a rich portrait of the slave Jim, a character unequalled in American literature: he is guileless, rebellious, genuine, superstitious, warmhearted, ignorant, and astute all at the same time. Huckleberry Finn remains one of the most contested books today. Objections are about the N-word which occurs more than two hundred times in the book. Others say the portrayal of African Americans is stereotypical, racially insensitive, and racist.

¹⁷ <https://media.istockphoto.com/illustrations/adventures-of-huckleberry-finn-royalty-on-the-mississippi-the-raft-illustration-id826753530?k=6&m=826753530&s=612x612&w=0&h=zj-qxIMKcgN9MPpzRWtLpf20yUjGVKtd7fdlj14po=>



- **1893: Aunt Jemima debuts at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago.**¹⁸

Pearl Milling based Aunt Jemima on a blackface “mammy” character portrayed in a traveling minstrel show, with Nancy Green as the happy, loyal slave, whose lack of education made her successful. By the time of Greene’s death in 1911, she was referred to as “the most famous colored woman in the world.”

- **September 18th, 1899: “The Maple Leaf Rag”**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_nBSSXiG9w

The early ragtime musical composition for piano was composed by **Scott Joplin**, becoming the model for ragtime compositions by subsequent composers. It is one of the most famous ragtime pieces and gave Joplin a steady income for the rest of his life. Ragtime music originated within African-American communities in the late 19th century and became a distinctly American form of popular music.

¹⁸ <https://i2.wp.com/emergingcivilwar.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Life-of-Aunt-Jemima.jpg?resize=768%2C1050&ssl=1>

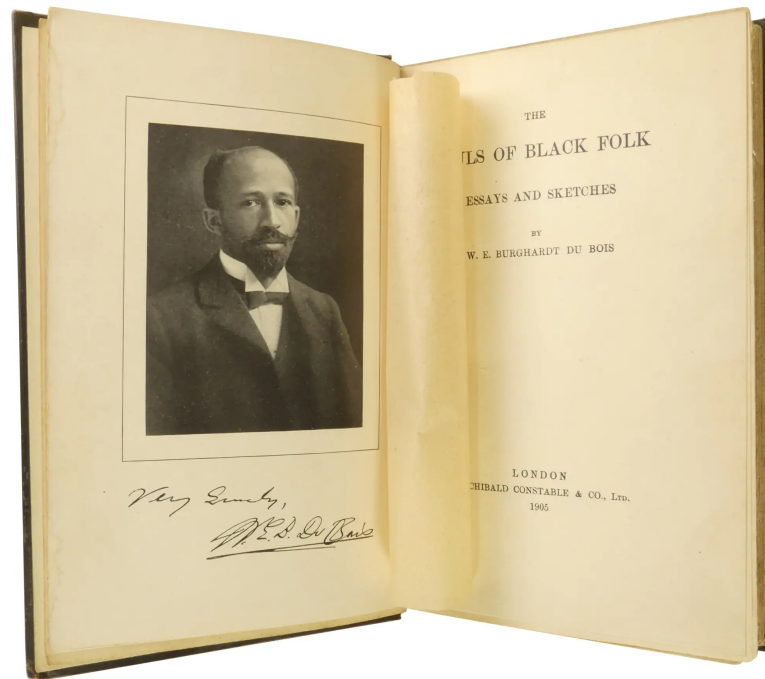


*Courtesy of Pragmaticbotsunite.com*¹⁹

- **1900: W.E.B. Du Bois and the 1900 Paris Exposition.**

The Exhibit of American Negroes is a sociological display at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris by W. E. B. Du Bois, whose goal was to demonstrate progress and commemorate the lives of African Americans at the turn of the century. Du Bois exhibits photographs of the "typical Negro faces," illustrating the social progress of African Americans, including studio portraits, informal snapshots, people working, family outings, images of houses and businesses, and the interiors of homes. The photographs of affluent young African-American men and women challenged the scientific "evidence" and popular racist caricatures of the day that ridiculed and sought to diminish African-American social and economic success. Photographic subjects were "performing" their class, their prosperity, and at the same time their blackness.

¹⁹ <http://pragmaticbotsunite2018.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/08762v-5.jpg>



Courtesy of Downtown Brown Books.²⁰

- **1903: W.E.B. Du Bois publishes "The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches."**

Du Bois writes about the "melody of the slave songs," or the Negro spirituals, and its' "articulate message of the slave to the world." Many whites had misread them as joyous, but he claims spirituals are the music "of an unhappy people, of the children of disappointment; they tell of death and suffering and unvoiced longing toward a truer world, of misty wanderings and hidden ways." According to Du Bois, the sorrow songs characterize a black folk culture untouched by the "civilizing" northern black churches that are preoccupied with respectability and Western aesthetics. Rather than remnants of enslavement, that need to be eliminated and forgotten by the "modernization of the negro," Du Bois believes spirituals are where the souls of African Americans' are located.

- February 8th, 1915: ***The Birth of a Nation***.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9t-7SVbLjBw>

Considered the most controversial film ever made in the United States, the film has been denounced for its racist depiction of African Americans. Black characters

²⁰ https://downtownbrown.cdn.bibliopolis.com/pictures/362933_2.jpg?auto=webp&v=1691692323

played by white actors in blackface were portrayed as unintelligent and sexually aggressive toward white women while the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is portrayed as a heroic force, necessary to preserve American values, protect white women, and maintain white supremacy. The NAACP protested in cities across the country, convincing some not to show the film.

- 1925: **The Harlem Renaissance.**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gboEyrj02g>

Also known as the **New Negro Movement**, The Harlem Renaissance is named after the anthology *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke. The movement is an intellectual and cultural revival of African-American music, dance, art, fashion, literature, theater, politics, and scholarship centered in Harlem, Manhattan, New York City, spanning the 1920s and 1930s.

- 1929: *Hallelujah!* is released.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLcNYv5EX3Q>

One of the first films to star an all-black cast, *Hallelujah!* offers African Americans significant roles in a movie and characterizes black rural workers with sensitivity and compassion. Some contemporary film historians argue *Hallelujah!* exhibits the director, King Vidor's paternalistic view of rural blacks that included racial stereotyping.

- Easter Sunday, 1939: – **Marian Anderson** performs *My Country, 'Tis of Thee*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAONYTMf2pk>

Anderson was a significant figure in the struggle for African-American artists to overcome racial prejudice in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. Her performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC attracts a crowd of more than 75,000 and is broadcast to millions on national radio. The **Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR)** had refused permission for Anderson to sing to an integrated audience in Constitution Hall and the federally controlled District of Columbia Board of Education declined a request to use the auditorium of a white public high school.

- 1939: **Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit*.**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bckob0AyKCA>

Nicknamed "Lady Day," Holiday has significantly impacted jazz music and pop singing with her vocal style and improvisational skills. Performed at Café Society in New York City, *Strange Fruit* is a protest against lynching and became a signature song for Holiday: "Southern trees bear a strange fruit/ Blood on the leaves and blood at the root/ Black bodies swingin' in the Southern breeze/ Strange fruit hangin' from the poplar trees..." The song was named by the *New York Times* as the beginning of the civil rights movement.

- 1941: Duke Ellington's ***Take the A Train***.
"Take the A Train", composed by Billy Strayhorn and recorded by the Duke Ellington Orchestra in early 1941. The "A" train connects Harlem, where many African Americans live, with other parts of the city. The record was an instant hit, with its rich arrangement, easily recognizable tune, positive vibe, and its musical references to the famous train line. Ellington decided to make it his band's signature song, which it remained for 30+ years.
- February 29th, 1940: **Hattie McDaniel** wins an Academy Award.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7t4pTNZshA>

Hattie McDaniel becomes the first African-American to win an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her performance as **Mammy** in ***Gone with the Wind***. McDaniel experienced racism and racial segregation throughout her career and was unable to attend the premiere of *Gone with the Wind* in Atlanta because it was held at a whites-only theater. At the Oscars ceremony in Los Angeles, she sat at a segregated table at the side of the room. In 1952, her final wish to be buried in Hollywood Cemetery was denied because the graveyard was restricted to whites only at the time.

- 1943: ***Stormy Weather***.
Jumpin Jive - Cab Calloway and the Nicholas Brothers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yGGtVKrD8>

The Hollywood musical starring **Lena Horne** showcases some of the leading African-American performers of the day, during an era when African-American actors and singers rarely appeared in lead roles in mainstream Hollywood productions. The supporting cast features the **Nicholas Brothers**, **Bill "Bojangles" Robinson**, **Cab Calloway**, **Fats Waller**, **Katherine Dunham** and her dancers, and **Dooley Wilson**.

3) Close Reading/ Project Proposal: A Digital Gallery:



'Am I not a woman and a sister' reads the legend arching over the female figure of Justice as she reaches towards a kneeling black slave woman, who holds her chained hands up in supplication. Courtesy of the New York Public Library.²¹

- **1837: *Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?***

²¹ <https://images.nypl.org/index.php?id=1231665&t=w>

Visual representations of blackness were created, funded, and otherwise promoted by progressive patrons and organizations that promoted African-American social and cultural equity. This engraving appeared in abolitionist George Bourne's *Slavery Illustrated in Its Effects upon Women*, published in 1837. Enslaved African-American women were particularly vulnerable to abuse at the hands of their white owners. The image highlights the connections between the anti-slavery and women's rights movements, as some women abolitionists use the anti-slavery cause to address their own plight as women. The connections they draw are highly controversial, and many anti-slavery organizations are split over the issue of women's rights.



Photographer Unknown, Sojourner Truth, 1852. Library of Congress.²²

- **1852: Sojourner Truth, Daguerreotype.**

Photography made counter-representation possible by “placing cameras in black hands.” Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, Frederick Douglass, and W. E. B. Du Bois all “practiced” photography, employing photographs in their varied quests for social and political justice, capitalizing on the political power of the photograph. In 1851, Truth delivered her speech “Ain’t I a Woman?”, one of the most famous speeches on African American and women’s rights in American history. For most of her remaining life, Truth continued to travel the United States to speak on matters relating to the rights of African Americans and women, including the right to vote.

²² <https://www.nps.gov/common/uploads/people/nri/20190416/people/8EF66212-0EAC-AB06-682307B413AADCEB/8EF66212-0EAC-AB06-682307B413AADCEB.jpg>



Courtesy of Brooklyn Museum ²³

- **1862: “A Ride for Liberty-The Fugitive Slaves” by Eastman Johnson.**
A Ride for Liberty depicts a family of African Americans fleeing enslavement in the Southern United States during the American Civil War, one of only a handful of contemporary works depicting the plight of slaves fleeing captivity in the South. His painting portrays an enslaved family in a dignified manner, providing little detail in facial expression or indication of plantation-life status. *A Ride for Liberty* highlights the courage of individual slaves in pursuing the hopes and dreams of a fair and just society and would become one of Johnson’s most renowned works.

²³ [http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-A4Vb9_4qdd0/UAWYtcbXRTI/AAAAAAAAACqQ/L_0Gxesznql/s1600/Eastman_Johnson - A Ride for Liberty - The Fugitive Slaves - ejb - fig_74 - pg_137.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-A4Vb9_4qdd0/UAWYtcbXRTI/AAAAAAAAACqQ/L_0Gxesznql/s1600/Eastman_Johnson_-_A_Ride_for_Liberty_-_The_Fugitive_Slaves_-_ejb_-_fig_74_-_pg_137.jpg)



Mary Edmonia Lewis. *Forever Free*. 1867. Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art.²⁴

- **“Forever Free” by Edmonia Lewis.**

Lewis, a sculptor of African American and Ojibwe heritage, completed *Forever Free* in Rome in 1867, two years after emancipation in the United States. Lewis sculpts two free figures. The Black man stands with a broken shackle in hand and raises his fist in a gesture of strength and self-determination. His female companion kneels and clasps her hands in gratitude. The differing postures of Lewis’s figures anticipate the divergent experiences of emancipated men and women.

²⁴ <https://collectionapi.metmuseum.org/api/collection/v1/iiif/846939/2038312/restricted>



Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux. *Why Born Enslaved!* 1868. Courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.²⁵

- **1868: “Why Born Enslaved!” by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux.**

“Why Born Enslaved!” was first conceived in 1868 by Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux one of the greatest French sculptors of the nineteenth century. The bust portrays a woman straining against a rope pulled taut around her arms, back, and breasts. *Why Born Enslaved!* was shaped by the enduring popularity of antislavery imagery, the development of nineteenth-century ethnographic theories of racial difference, and France’s colonialist fascination with Africa.

²⁵ <https://i0.wp.com/thecitylife.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/DP-22405-001.jpeg?fit=1536%2C1152&ssl=1>



Figure 5: Thomas Hovenden, *Dem was Good Ole Times* (1882). Courtesy of Chrysler Museum of Art.²⁶

1882: “Dem was Good Ole Times” by Thomas Hovenden.

White genre painters rarely depicted African Americans with dignity and sympathy in the 19th century. People of color were portrayed as nostalgic for the past despite the painful memories of enslavement, apparently satisfied within their dilapidated surroundings and tattered clothing, as in Hovenden's painting, *Dem was Good Ole Times*. Hovenden taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. One of his students was Henry Ossawa Tanner, possibly the first African-American student, who became famous for the dignified portrayal of blacks in *The Banjo Lesson*.

²⁶ http://2.americanart.si.edu/images/1980/1980.16_1a.jpg



Figure 1: J. Vengling, *Rent Day* (1888). Courtesy of the Clark Art Institute.²⁷

- In 1906, in “The Refining Influence of Art,” Williams cites the image, depicting the modest home of an old African-American couple and their dreaded landlord. Williams maintained that the contemporary art world lacked African-American representation that could cultivate interest in their history and current state of affairs, failing to depict the intelligence, strength, or sense of civic responsibility or their social progress from slavery to freedom to citizenship.

²⁷ https://media.clarkart.edu/Web_medium_images/1955.4296.jpg



Courtesy of Hampton University Museum, Hampton, VA.²⁸

- **1893: “The Banjo Lesson” by Henry Ossawa Tanner.**

Henry Ossawa Tanner was the United States’ first African-American celebrity artist. His training at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and at the Académie Julian in Paris put him in the unique position of having experienced two vastly different approaches to painting— American Realism and French academic painting. He was also one of the few artists to have had such training at a time when there were many barriers to education for African Americans. In 1893, Tanner painted his most famous work, *The Banjo Lesson*, depicting an elderly black man teaching a boy, assumed to be his grandson, how to play the banjo. Blacks had long been stereotyped as entertainers in American culture, and the image of a black man playing the banjo appears throughout American art of the late 19th century which is

²⁸ <https://smarthistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/tanner.jpg>

often reduced to a minstrel-type portrayal. Instead, the painting portrays a specific moment of human interaction.

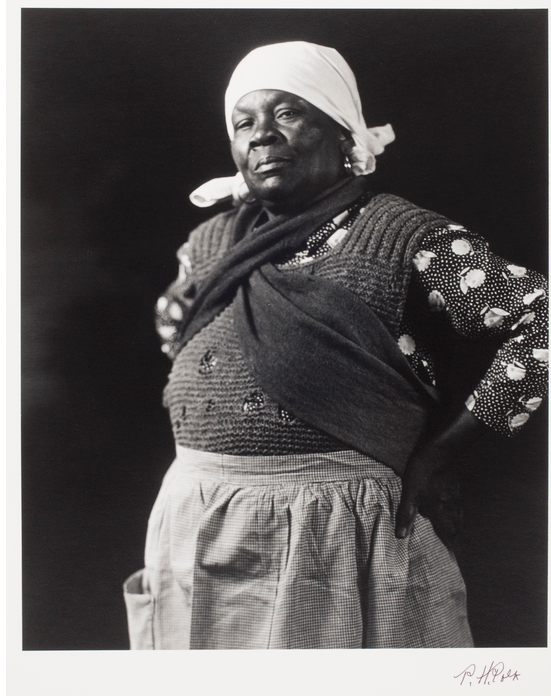


Aaron Douglas, *And the Stars Began to Fall*, 1925. Courtesy of Wikimedia.

1925: "And the Stars Began to Fall" by Aaron Douglas²⁹

Aaron Douglas' approach to art combined Western experiences with non-Western traditions, to elevate them to the avant-garde. He expressed African-American culture by integrating visual interpretations of the repetitive and rhythmic patterns found in jazz music. Silhouettes, harsh angles, concentric circles, and waves, celebrate urban culture and modernism.

²⁹ Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Courtesy of The International Center of Photography (ICP)³⁰

1932: "The Boss." by P.H. Polk.

P. H. Polk studied photography at the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, which was founded by Booker T. Washington in 1881. At a time when portraits of African Americans were often caricatures of existing stereotypes, Polk and his sitters created photographs that showed the pride and dignity of a black community eager to reflect on their achievements. White photographers have often dominated the narrative of the medium's history. But Polk's work influenced black self-identity and countered the many distorted and racist images that existed at the turn of the century. Rather than presenting the stereotype of a Southern "mammy," "The Boss" is a powerful example of this talent.

³⁰ https://s3.amazonaws.com/icptmsdata/p/o/l/k/polk_p_h_96_1982b_413023_displaysize.jpg

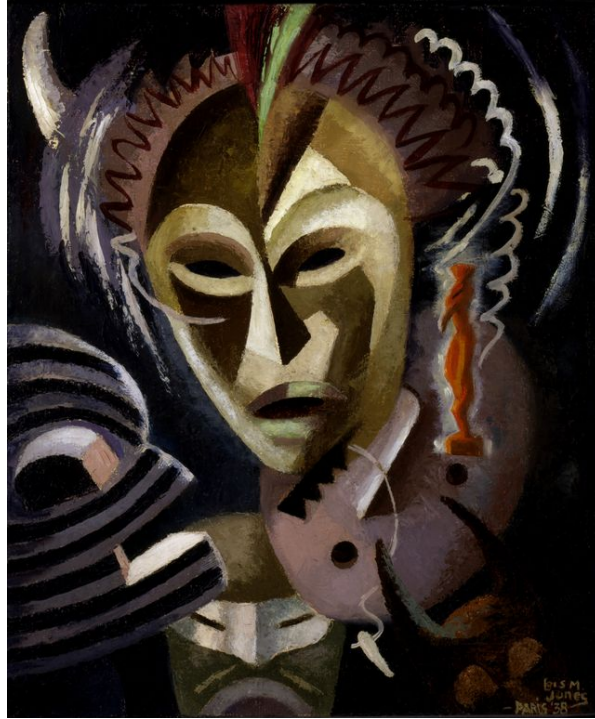


*Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, Talking Skull, 1939. Courtesy of the Museum of African American History.*³¹

- **1939: “Talking Skull” by Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller.**

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller was born into an African-American middle-class Philadelphia family in 1877 and studied in Paris. Critics called her the “sculptor of horrors,” when her contorted black figures were exhibited in 1903. Fuller claimed her work was “of the soul, rather than the figure.” W. E. B. Du Bois recruited her to assist with the “Negro Exhibit” for the 1900 Paris World’s Fair, though, as a young, single, unchaperoned artist living in Paris, he demanded that Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller conform to society’s expectations of a proper middle-class African American woman.

³¹ <https://www.themagazineantiques.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/155-Talking-Skull.jpg>



*Loïs Mailou Jones, Les Fétiches, 1938. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution.*³²

- **1938: “Les Fétiches” by Loïs Mailou Jones.**

Jones’s surrealist African masks transformed problematic French colonial objects into expressions of modern black identity. Masks from different African tribes convey a mysterious spiritual dimension summoned by ritual dance. Like Williams, Jones came from a secure Boston background and did not experience racial discrimination although when the Corcoran Gallery awarded her in 1941, a white friend claimed it, rather than risk having it rescinded.

³² <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/les-fetiches-31947>



Augusta Savage, *Lift Every Voice, and Sing (The Harp)*, 1939, Courtesy of the New York Public Library.³³

- **1939: *Lift Every Voice, and Sing (The Harp)* by Augusta Savage.**

Augusta Savage was passionately involved in the artistic and political life of Harlem, creating the Arts & Crafts Studio, the Harlem Art Workshop, and the Vanguard Club, to raise awareness, encourage talent, and find solutions to black Americans' social issues. Her last commission was for the 1939 New York Fair, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, which was a great success, but unable to finance the transport of her work, she was forced to destroy it. Having committed her life to battling for respect and civil rights, A. Savage is a legend of the Harlem Renaissance.

³³ https://awarewomenartists.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/augusta-savage_lift-every-voice-and-sing-the-harp_1939_aware_women-artists_artistes-femmes.jpg



Gordon Parks, *American Gothic*, 1942. Courtesy of the Gordon Parks Foundation³⁴³⁵

- **1942: Gordon Parks, *American Gothic*.**

Gordon Parks is considered one of the most distinguished photographers of the twentieth century, who consistently explored the impact of poverty, racism, and other forms of discrimination. In the early 1940s, Gordon Parks worked for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and, later, the Office of War Information (OWI), confronting the challenges as a Black man in Washington DC. *American Gothic*, a reference to the famous Grant Wood painting, is a portrait of a government cleaning woman Ella

³⁴ <https://2.api.artsmia.org/800/100557.jpg>

³⁵ <https://static01.nyt.com/images/2018/05/15/lens/14ella2/14ella2-superJumbo.jpg?quality=75&auto=webp>

Watson, which provides a rare focus on a black female subject who is a mother and a worker, not an actress or singer.