

African American Timeline

1860–1869

1860

The United States census reports 4.44 million African Americans, representing just over 14 percent of the total population.

1861

William C. Nell is the first African American to hold a federal civilian position when he becomes a post office clerk in Boston, Massachusetts.

Nathaniel Gordon is found guilty of violating the 1820 act that prohibits slave importation when his ship, the *Erie*, is captured with enslaved Africans aboard. Gordon is hanged the following year.

William Tillman, a cook on the *S. J. Waring*, is captured along with his ship's crew by a Confederate ship, *Jefferson Davis*. Tillman escapes, kills his captors and helps return the schooner to New York. As a reward for his service to his nation, he reportedly receives a stipend of more than \$5,000.

An experiment begun at Port Royal in the South Carolina Sea Islands demonstrates that African Americans are more productive as free, paid workers than they are as enslaved laborers. The effort is conducted by abolitionist Edward Philbrick, who sells parcels of land to his workers in 1864.

1861-1863

In the early years of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln and Union military officers refuse offers of help from African Americans who want to fight against slavery. However, African Americans are pressed into service in the southern states, forming several Confederate regiments. In early 1863 authorization is finally given for the muster of Union regiments of African American soldiers. In May the War Department organizes African American troops into the United States Colored Troops (USCT). By July, 30 African American regiments are under USCT command.

African Americans serve with distinction during the war. Sergeant William Harvey Carney of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment performs with valor in the Union's unsuccessful attack on Fort Wagner near Charleston, South Carolina, in 1863. At the Battle of Port Hudson in Louisiana, Captain James Lewis, who began his participation in the war as a Confederate officer, leads his troops in battle. Martin R. Delany, the first African American field officer, serves as major of the 104th Regiment of Colored Troops. Robert Smalls, a sailor on the Confederate ship, *Planter*, sails the vessel out of Charleston harbor and turns it over to the Union.

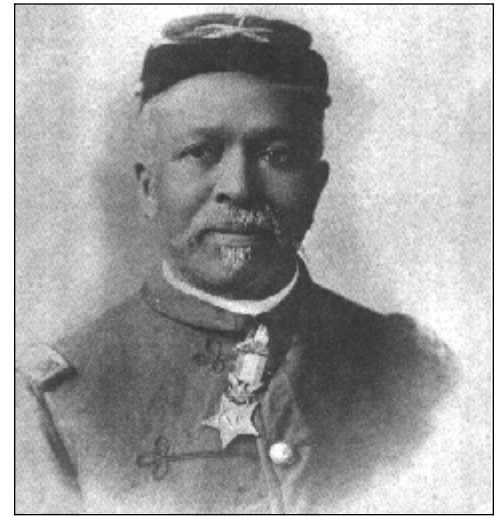


Major Martin R. Delany

Awarded the rank of captain, he serves the Union with distinction during the conflict. African American women also participate, with many serving in hospitals and military camps. The total number of African Americans serving in the military during this war is estimated at 200,000, comprising approximately 10 percent of the Union fighting force; 38,000 of these lose their lives.

Eight African American physicians are appointed to the Army Medical Corps during the war. The most distinguished is Dr. Alexander T. Augusta, who is given the rank of major and placed in charge of Camp Barker, later organized as Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Augusta thus becomes the first African American in the nation to head a major medical facility. The other seven physicians are Drs. Anderson Abbott, John V. De Grasse, William Ellis, William Powell, Charles Purvis, John Rapier and Alpheus Tucker.

Twenty-one African Americans receive the Congressional Medal of Honor, five for their service to the Navy and sixteen for valor in the Army. Of the Army awards, 11 are issued to soldiers exhibiting bravery and courage at the Battle of Chafin's Farm.



Medal of Honor recipient
Sergeant Major Christian A. Fleetwood

1862

President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation declares that all enslaved African Americans in the rebelling states are free. The proclamation will go into effect on January 1, 1863.

Mary Jane Patterson becomes the first African American woman to graduate from college in the United States, receiving a degree from Oberlin College in Ohio.

1863

The Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect. Freed African Americans find themselves with very limited occupational opportunities. Many continue to work for their former owners. In cities, they face increased job competition and exclusion. Many African Americans enlist and fight in the Civil War.

Because of the war effort, rapid migration from south to north occurs. This migration, coupled with the generally lower wages of the unstable Civil War economy, leads European American workers to fear that African Americans will replace them in the labor force and take all available new jobs. The result is a series of race riots, the most serious of which takes place in New York City.

Bishop Daniel A. Payne, of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, heads a group that purchases Wilberforce University from the Methodist Episcopal Church. The school, which closed during the early years of the war, is reopened with Bishop Payne as its first African American president.

Henry MacNeal Turner, a minister (later bishop) in the AME Church, is appointed by President Lincoln as the first African American chaplain in the Union army. He later serves in the Georgia legislature.

1864

Some Confederate officers vow to kill any African American Union soldiers captured. At the Battle of Fort Pillow, in Tennessee, African Americans surrender and nearly 300 are then massacred, including women and children.

A federal law is enacted freeing the wives and children of African American soldiers.

The National Equal Rights League is formed in Syracuse, New York, to promote the cause of African American suffrage and to lobby for equal rights. This is the first of a series of independent conventions that African Americans hold during the next six years to consolidate support for their newly won freedom.

The nation's first African American daily newspaper, the *New Orleans Tribune*, is a bilingual publication printed in French and English.

Mid-1860s

African Americans benefit from the \$2 million George Peabody Education Fund, established to promote education in the South. The funds are generally distributed on the basis of need.

1865

The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishes slavery throughout the country.

Dr. John S. Rock becomes the first African American to practice law before the nation's Supreme Court. Rock, who gave up his medical practice due to ill health, was admitted to the Massachusetts bar in 1861.

The Chesapeake Marine Railroad and Dry Dock Company is established in Baltimore, Maryland, by Isaac Myers. The company employs hundreds of African American workers.

John Jones, a wealthy businessman, is instrumental in gaining the repeal of discriminatory laws in Chicago. In the early 1870s, he becomes commissioner of Cook County and the first African American to serve on the Chicago Board of Education.

Shaw University is founded in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The Freedmen's Bureau is formed within the War Department. It provides relief assistance and help in acquiring land for freed African Americans. The purpose of the Bureau is expanded in 1866 to emphasize education. The Bureau will be disbanded in 1872.

c. 1865-1866

After the Civil War, several states pass "black codes," designed to create legal restrictions on the rights granted by the Emancipation Proclamation (1862). Although the wording and regulations of the codes varies in each state, they all serve the purpose of reducing the ability of newly emancipated African Americans to benefit from their freedom.

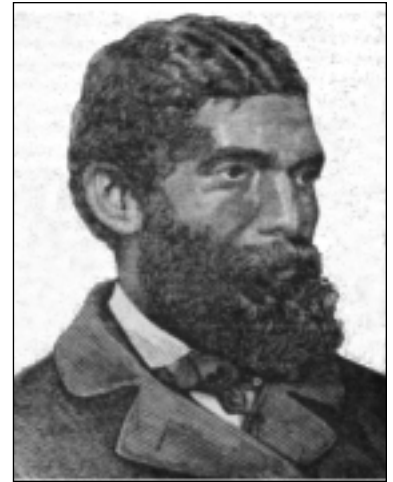
1866

Edward G. Walker and Charles L. Mitchell become the first African American state legislators when they are elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

A civil rights act is passed by Congress over President Johnson's veto. This act defines citizenship and prohibits discrimination based on race. Because it lacks the support of the president and the Supreme Court, the act has little practical effect.

James Milton Turner, one of the first African American teachers to be hired in Missouri, founds Lincoln University in Jefferson City. It succeeds a smaller school, Ashmun Institution, which was started in 1854.

Jonathan J. Wright becomes the first African American admitted to the bar in South Carolina. He later serves as an associate justice of the state supreme court.



Dr. John S. Rock

Fisk University, named in honor of General Clinton B. Fisk, in Nashville, Tennessee, and Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, Florida, are founded.

The state of Rhode Island passes a statute ending segregated schools. The action is primarily the result of efforts by George T. Downing, a successful African American caterer and financier in Providence.

1867

Howard University, named in honor of General Oliver Otis Howard, is founded in Washington, D.C., by an act of Congress. Efforts of the American Missionary Association lead to the establishment of Atlanta University in Georgia and Talladega College in Alabama. Johnson C. Smith University at Charlotte and St. Augustine's College, both in North Carolina, and Morehouse College at Atlanta, Georgia, are also founded.



Francis L. Cardozo

Although records are not entirely clear, it is believed that the first inter-racial jury convened at the federal level is the one empaneled to try Jefferson Davis for his participation in the Civil War.

1868

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution grants citizenship to African Americans.

Hampton Institute, which grew out of a school begun in 1861 near Fort Monroe, Virginia, is founded. It becomes incorporated two years later. The medical school of Howard University in Washington, D.C., opens to both African American and European American students. Initially operated as Camp Barker and then the Freedmen's Bureau under the War Department, Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C., is organized on a permanent basis.

Jonathan Gibbs is elected secretary of state in Florida. He serves until 1872.

Educated in England and Scotland, Francis L. Cardozo becomes South Carolina's secretary of state. He serves until 1872, when he begins a four-year term as state treasurer.

John Willis Menard is elected to the United States House of Representatives from Louisiana. Although he is not granted his seat in the House, he is awarded full pay for the position.

1869

Jefferson F. Long, a Republican from Georgia, becomes the first African American to serve in the United States House of Representatives. He serves one term.

Fanny Jackson Coppin becomes president of the Institute for Colored Youth in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after serving at the school as a teacher for four years. Her autobiography is entitled *Reminiscences of School Life and Hints on Teaching*.

The Colored National Labor Union is organized in Washington, D.C.

Ebenezer D. Bassett is appointed minister to Haiti by President Ulysses S. Grant. Bassett serves until 1877.

Tougaloo College in Mississippi is founded