

# AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

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THE UNTOLD STORIES

Y V E T T E L O N G

6th grade

## CHAPTER 4

# ART

Artwork, which can include metalwork, sculpture, woodwork, paintings, sketches, and more, can show the skill of the artist and the materials available at the time. In the colonies of New Spain and New England, many artists produced religious images and sculptures. Landscapes and portraits of colonists are other examples of popular art during this period.



African Americans cultivated their own forms of art and contributed to the developing artistic tradition in the early United States. These forms can be seen in several findings in enslaved communities, such as a small drum, wrought iron figures, dozens of ceramic faces, and more. There are several examples of the New England based engraver Scipio Moorhead and the Baltimore based painter Joshua Johnson producing artwork that would occasionally depict African American subjects. Moorhead's only surviving image was a portrait of the African American poet, Phillis Wheatley (see

next section). It is a shame that no other works survived, as Moorhead was described by the *Boston News* as an artist of "extraordinary genius."



Joshua Johnson was the first African American to work full time as a painter, establishing his skill for depicting colonists in portraits. He was born to an enslaved mother but received his freedom early on in life and began advertising his skills as a portrait painter. He primarily made his home in Baltimore but moved frequently to be near his clientele. His portraits included families, which was a rarity during

this period of American art, as well as single subjects. His most famous painting, *The Westwood Children*, shows the children of Margaret and John Westwood, who owned a successful stagecoach manufacturing operation (pictured above). This painting hangs in the National Gallery as an example of the skill of this self-taught early African American painter.

Pre-dating Johnson, the earliest evidence of African American art in the U.S. is the work of skilled craftsmen, who were also slaves, from New England. These skilled craftsmen were hired out by slave owners to create items such as instruments, quilts, ironwork, baskets, ceramics, gold work, and more. Some were able to keep a percentage of their earnings and bought their freedom. These craftsmen built many of the most beautiful houses in Louisiana, South Carolina, Georgia, and more. For example, the famous wrought-iron balconies of New Orleans were constructed by slave craftsmen (see above). These craftsmen often were inspired by traditions of arts from their homelands and brought these techniques with them when they were forcibly brought to the Americas. Thus, many of the artistic products of African Americans during this period were inspired by traditions in African art. In this way, their artisanal skills shaped the architecture and craftsmanship of the pre-United States.

## AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

There also were African Americans who achieved notoriety due to their artwork. One example of a famous craftsman was John Bush, a soldier fighting on behalf of the British during the French and Indian Wars. He became famous because of the beautiful carvings he would make using gunpowder horns. On the powder horns, he would carve designs and outstanding calligraphy (see above). Because of his efforts, he is considered the founder of American folk art. Some African Americans achieved individual fame for their contributions and artistic pioneering.

These examples show the many ways in which African American men were contributing to the architectural and artistic environment in the area before the country was established. This matters in a broader sense, because of the important role that art played in culture and society overall.

## CHAPTER REVIEW

1. What's the importance of studying art during a particular historical time period?
  - a. It shows what materials were available.
  - b. It shows unique insights into the lives of people during that time.
  - c. It shows what was important to people during their lifetime.
  - d. All of the above
2. Whose only surviving piece is an engraving of Phillis Wheatley?
  - a. John Bush
  - b. Joshua Johnson
  - c. Scipio Moorhead
  - d. Jean DuSable
3. Who is credited as being the first African American to make a living as a painter in the United States?
  - a. John Bush
  - b. Joshua Johnson
  - c. Scipio Moorhead
  - d. Jean DuSable
4. What is Joshua Johnson's most famous painting?
  - a. *The Westwood Children*
  - b. *Portrait of a Family*
  - c. *John Westwood*
  - d. *Nuestra Senora de los Dolores*

THE "PRE-UNITED STATES" DAYS, 1513-1774

5. What was one thing that made Joshua Johnson's paintings unique?
  - a. His portraits of colonists
  - b. His depictions of animals
  - c. His paintings of chairs
  - d. His depictions of families or groups
  
6. TRUE OR FALSE: Many slaves were able to buy their own freedom by selling the products of their craftsmanship.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  
7. What are some of the skills some African American artisans became famous for during this period?
  - a. Ironwork
  - b. Beading
  - c. Needlepoint
  - d. Painting
  
8. Who is considered the founder of American folk art?
  - a. John Bush
  - b. Joshua Johnson
  - c. Scipio Moorhead
  - d. Jean DuSable
  
9. Many African American artisans were inspired by:
  - a. Catholic artwork
  - b. African artistic traditions
  - c. Folk art
  - d. British artwork

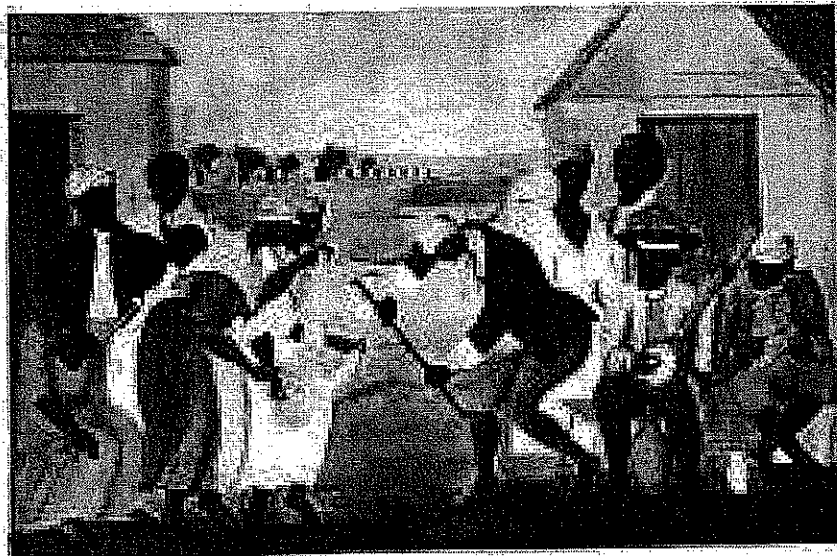
## CHAPTER 6

# SPORTS

The growth of cities and the increase of wealth in the colonies caused an increase in sports throughout the new country. Games and events occurred commonly during holidays or celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and included stoolball, foot races, quoits, and nine pins or bowling. More violent gaming existed too, with the advent of cockfighting, wrestling, and an early version of football. These sporting events were a time to escape the tediousness of daily life and establish stronger ties of community.

For African Americans, those who lived in free states participated in these activities and forms of entertainment. Those who lived as slaves also found forms of recreation to improve their lives and enjoy time spent with one another. This is not to say that life was easy for slaves, as the daily violence, uncertainty, and dehumanization they experienced is unfathomable. Rather, this is to say that African Americans in all situations carried their culture, their communal ties, and their ability to foster recreation with them. In order to participate in sports, slaves would be required to have access to leisure time, which varied depending on the slave owner's particular temperament and rules. Leisure time can be defined as time off from work to relax and participate in activities that one enjoys. For example, an author and journalist named James Buckingham commented, while visiting a plantation, that there were "no games or

recreations...provided, nor was there indeed any time to enjoy them if they were." James Williams, a former slave, remarked that "there was little leisure for any of the hands on the plantation. Even on Sundays, there was little or no respite from toil." When a preacher heard that slaves were not even given Sundays off, he confronted the plantation owners, who responded that "if they were not at work, they would be sporting and roving about the fields and woods."



However, this was not the case on all plantations. On some, during holidays where they enjoyed leisure time, slaves enjoyed music as a form of recreation. Many slaves were given Sundays off as well as Good Friday, Christmas Day, and for some plantations, Easter. During these

holidays, some slave owners even supplied slaves with food and drinks in order to keep them complacent and happy. These African Americans would enjoy spending times in the woods, gambling, playing music, and dancing for recreation. This ability to have a community, build culture, and joining together showed the resilience of these African Americans during this period.

This historical record from this early period thus gives historians less material to understand how slaves practiced recreation, but it does show that each plantation had a different set of rules. Working within these confines, African Americans fostered their own culture, mirth, and spirit of resilience through music making and games.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. What are some popular games during this period (1776-1800)?
  - a. Foot races
  - b. Cockfighting
  - c. Bowling
  - d. All of the above
  
2. What sport did African Americans living in the North participate in for fun during this period?
  - a. Music
  - b. Baseball
  - c. The same sports as white Americans
  - d. Football
  
3. Define "leisure time":
  - a. Time off from work to relax and participate in activities that one enjoys
  - b. Synonymous with holidays
  - c. Time to finish one's duties
  - d. Time to meet with one's supervisor
  
4. What did African Americans living in enslavement need to have recreation?
  - a. Sundays off from work
  - b. Leisure time
  - c. A large plantation
  - d. An owner with clear rules
  
5. What days were some slaves given off?
  - a. Christmas
  - b. Sundays
  - c. Easter
  - d. All of the above
  
6. What did many African Americans living as slaves enjoy for recreation?
  - a. Dancing
  - b. Gambling
  - c. Music
  - d. All of the above
  
7. What does this period show us about plantations?
  - a. That each operated with its own set of rules
  - b. That each ran in more or less the same way
  - c. That each plantation always gave slaves the day off on Sundays
  - d. None of the above



## CHAPTER 6

# SPORTS

This period was also a golden age for African Americans entering sports, who broke open doors and the color barrier and showing their skill and talent in a wide variety of sports. Track and field, basketball, boxing, and rodeo all saw African American athletes at the top of their game in this time period.

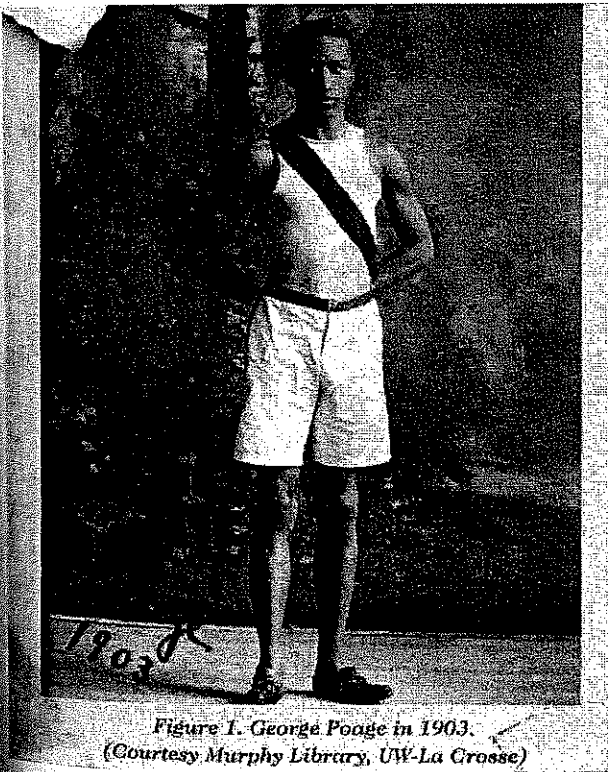


Figure 1. George Poage in 1903.  
(Courtesy Murphy Library, UW-La Crosse)

For example, George Poage (1880-1962) was born in Wisconsin, was the salutatorian of his high school class, and went on to compete in track in college at the University of Wisconsin. He was famous for his performance in track and field in the 1904 Olympics, winning two medals.

Poage's legacy was carried forward by Jesse Owens (1913-1980), who won four gold medals at the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and held the long jump record for nearly three decades. Owens was born in Alabama and was recognized for his incredible speed

early on when he won three track events in high school. Owens was called the "The Buckeye Bullet"

because of his unbelievable speed, as he broke four world records before even qualifying for the Olympics. His performance in the Olympics flew in the face of the violent racism preached by Adolf Hitler, who had criticized U.S. officials for allowing the inclusion of African Americans in the Olympics. For his performance, he was later rewarded with the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Gerald Ford.

Ora Mae Washington (1898-1971) born in Carolina County Virginia was the first prominent African American athlete to dominate two sports, tennis and basketball. She won her first national tournament in 1925, and her first national championship within a year of picking up the racket. Tennis as a sport was racially segregated so her opponents were other African Americans. In response to the USTA ban on black players competing in their tournaments, a group of African American businessmen, college professors, and physicians founded the American Tennis Association (ATA) in Washington D.C. on November 30, 1916. The ATA is the oldest black sports organization in the United States.

Then there is "The Great One," the one and only Muhammed Ali, born Cassius Clay (1942-2016). Born in Kentucky, Ali began training as an amateur boxer from a young age. By age 18, he had already won a gold medal at the 1960 Summer Olympics. Ali achieved fame when he won a major upset victory against the heavyweight championship from Sonny Liston. Ali is the only three-time champion of the heavyweight boxing division, as he defeated dozens of challengers. Ali is well-known for more than just his unparalleled boxing ability, but also for his activism, as he joined the Nation of Islam. His participation in the Nation of Islam caused him to change his name. Ali refused the Vietnam draft and fought for equality for African Americans. He loved the spotlight and brought a level of confidence and power to his performance unseen before. Ali is widely regarded as the most significant sportsman of the twentieth century and later went on to be a public face for Parkinson's disease, as well as a raiser of awareness and funds for charitable causes around the world.



Muhammed Ali was far from the only great African American boxer. The list of ESPN's Best Boxers of All Time includes several African American men: Ali; Sugar Ray Robinson; Floyd Mayweather, Jr.; Joe Louis; Mike Tyson; Lennox Lewis; Evander Holyfield; and Manny Pacquiano.

In the sport of basketball, an incredible team was formed, named The Harlem Globetrotters, which combined basketball with visual theatrics. This group combined sport and theatre by holding performance games. They participated in the World Professional Basketball Tournament and won in 1940. Just eight years later, they again beat one of the most well-known white basketball teams in the country, the Minneapolis Lakers. They still perform today around the world.

Finally, the Southwestern Colored Cowboys Association (SCAA) formed in the late 1940s, by



black cowboys, to allow African Americans to compete in rodeo events. The SCAA sponsored "All Colored" rodeo events, particularly in Oklahoma and Texas, building on the "Soul Circuit" minority rodeos in the Texas Gulf region. While the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) was created in 1936 to sanction official rodeo events, and never officially barred African Americans from competing in its

events, Jim Crow, segregation, and other laws and racial attitudes did prevent African American cowboys from competing in white-sponsored rodeos. In 1966, Myrtis Dightman broke the color barrier and became the first African American cowboy in the SCAA to qualify for the PRCA National Finals Rodeo; while in 1982, Charlie Sampson became the first African American to win in the PRCA National Finals.

CHAPTER REVIEW

1. For which sport was George Poage known?
  - a. Boxing
  - b. Basketball
  - c. Track and Field
  - d. Golf
  
2. George Poage is well-known because:
  - a. He broke four world records before he was 18
  - b. He was a prominent activist and athlete
  - c. He was considered the greatest runner of all time
  - d. He was the first African American to compete in the Olympic Games
  
3. For which sport was Jesse Owens known?
  - a. Boxing
  - b. Basketball
  - c. Track and Field
  - d. Golf
  
4. Jesse Owens achieved acclaim because:
  - a. He won gold medals at the Berlin Olympics
  - b. He broke four world records early on
  - c. His attendance of the Olympics in spite of Adolf Hitler discouraging the participation of African Americans
  - d. All of the above
  
5. For which sport was Muhammed Ali known?
  - a. Boxing
  - b. Basketball
  - c. Track and Field
  - d. Golf
  
6. Ali participated in which organization:
  - a. The Sportsman's League of America
  - b. The Nation of Islam
  - c. The NAACP
  - d. All of the above

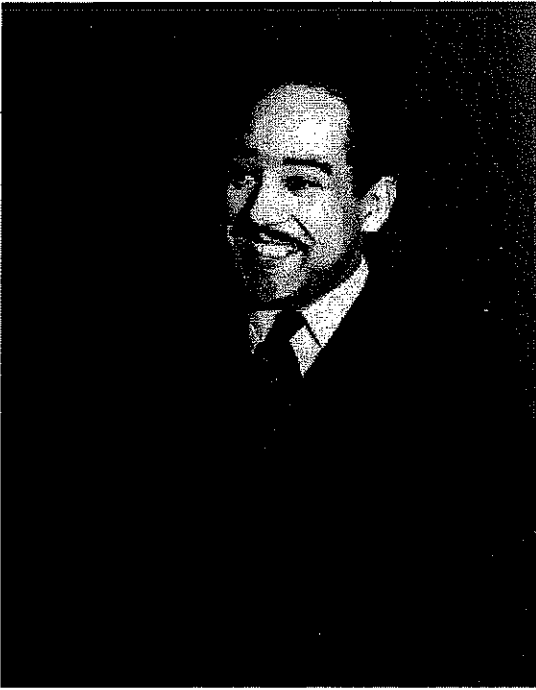
## CHAPTER 5

# LITERATURE AND MUSIC

The Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights Movement also fostered enormous outpourings of literary talent. This period of literature is one of the golden ages of writing in the United States, as authors told intimate, unique, and bold stories about their lives and the lives of African Americans, at the turn of the century and beyond.

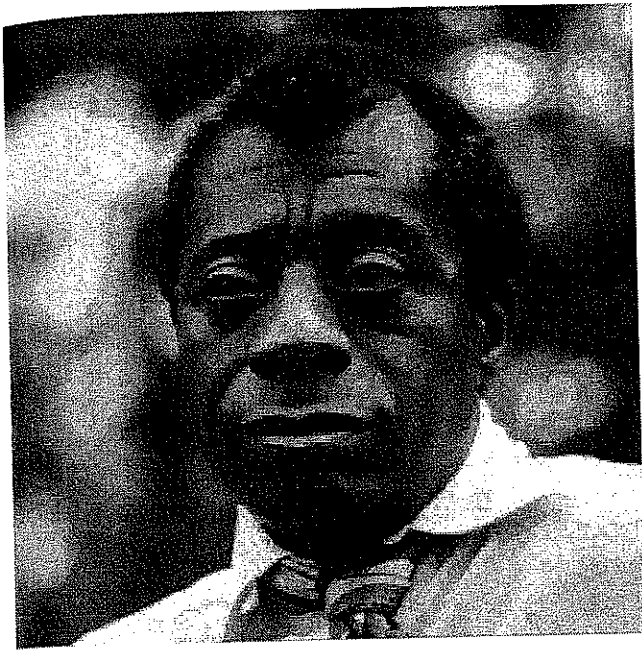
As a seminal figure in the Harlem Renaissance, Claude McKay (1889-1948) was a prominent writer and poet. His four novels - *Home to Harlem*, *Banjo*, *Banana Bottom*, and *Amiable with Big Teeth* - each made waves when they came out.

McKay was born in Jamaica but attended the Tuskegee Institute before he moved to New York, where he would spend the rest of his life. He identified with the Communist Party and was an active member of the Industrial Workers of the World before founding the influential and secret society, the African Blood Brotherhood. *Home to Harlem* won the Harmon Gold Award for Literature for his depiction of Harlem as a vivacious and complex space. This work has continued to attract international audiences for decades.



Langston Hughes (1902-1967) was one of the most breathtaking early poets of the Harlem Renaissance. He was born in Missouri but eventually moved to New York City. As a young man, Hughes was hired to work as a crewman aboard the S.S. *Malone*, where he spent six months traveling the world. He published his first poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," in *The Crisis*, in association with the NAACP. His poetry electrified audiences as he spoke of the multifaceted and complex experience of African Americans. He rejected black self-hatred and contributed to the cultural nationalism of African American communities. He also wrote novels, such as *Not Without Laughter*, which won the Harmon Gold Medal for literature. Hughes is remembered for his writings, as well as for inventing a new art form, called jazz poetry.

As one of Hughes finest contemporaries, Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) was an equally talented writer. Hurston was born in Alabama but relocated to Florida. She used her hometown of Eatonville, Florida as the backdrop of many of her stories in the future. Hurston went to Howard University and studied anthropology while founding many societies and conducting research with some of the most well-known anthropologists of the time. She was immediately a star in New York and immersed herself in the company of Langston Hughes and Wallace Thurman. Hurston traveled extensively, studying folklore and voodoo in the Caribbean and Central America. She published her anthropological work, as well as three novels. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was perhaps her most impactful and masterful work, as it told the intimate life story of a young African American woman in the South. Hurston was one of the most successful and detailed black female writers of the period.



Perhaps one of the most prolific African American novelists, playwrights, poets, and activists, James Baldwin (1924-1987) made his mark on the literary culture of the United States in the period following the Harlem Renaissance. Baldwin was born in New York City and faced many obstacles in his childhood, as his father and his stepfather both died before Baldwin was twenty years old. By the time he was twenty-four, he was completely disillusioned about race relations in the country, after experiencing racist abuse from the police and in public. He moved to Paris, France, and became deeply involved in the cultural scene of France at the time. Baldwin felt particularly targeted as he was also identified as a homosexual. Baldwin's literary achievements have made their mark on literature internationally. His first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, is a semi-autobiographical account of Harlem during the 1950s. His first collection of essays, *Notes of a Native Son* became one of the most important protest novels in American history. His second novel, *Giovanni's Room*, was one of the first works to be published openly telling the moving and deeply thoughtful story of an interracial gay romance. His writings, paired with his activism (in one interview, he called the Statue of Liberty "nothing but a bitter joke"), render Baldwin one of the more controversial, and memorable, figures in American history.



Along with authorship, African-Americans started to make noticeable headway in publishing ventures. John H. Robinson debuted *Ebony Magazine* in 1945, vowing to showcase the happier side of African-American life, as well as *Jet Magazine*. *Ebony* reported on that happier side with success stories but also covered ongoing racism. In 1955, *Jet Magazine* published a graphic photograph of the 14-year-old murdered boy, Emmett Till, in his coffin, at the request of his mother, to “show the world what they had done to my son.” John H. Robinson was the grandson of slaves and was the first

African-American to be published on the Forbes List of the 400 Richest Americans.



Musicians also experienced a renaissance during this period, with the popularization of jazz music. One of the most important of these musicians was Billie Holiday. Her incredible voice inspired jazz musicians and led to the pioneering of tempo, in part because she had a knack for improvisation. Although Holiday never received any formal musical education, she began singing in Harlem nightclubs and was eventually signed onto a recording contract. She is perhaps most well-known for her performance of “Strange Fruit,” a song describing the horrors of lynching.





But in terms of national and worldwide impact, the invention of Motown music by Berry Gordy, Jr. not only revolutionized American music by creating a new genre, but played an important social role in breaking down the barriers of segregation, and enabling integration in performing venues and on national television. As producer and promoter, Berry Gordy, Jr. made it possible for hundreds of African American singers and entertainers to have a huge positive impact on the world.

Martha Reeves (of Martha and the Vandellas, singer of "Heat Wave," "Dancing in the Streets," and other hit songs) recalled in her autobiography how, when they only wanted to go to the bathroom, they faced a man with a double-barreled shotgun in the South, in the fittingly named town of Lynchburg, Mississippi. In Memphis, Tennessee one month later, on December 1, 1962, one side of the audience "white only," the other side "black only," they were instructed to "sing each song twice, first facing white, then facing black." No wonder we needed a Civil Rights Act.

Yet, one after another, the Motown machine kept producing hit songs, singers, and groups, making American history and changing American culture. Although the Motown artists were hugely talented in their own right, the worldwide popularity of the Beatles in 1964 helped in a small way to popularize Motown music throughout the world, especially when they performed on the same bill with African American artists in formerly "white only" concert venues. The Beatles covered Motown songs on their first album, and Motown returned the favor a few years later when multiple Motown artists covered Beatles songs. The Beatles said they were entranced by Motown music, and their albums clearly show its influence on their artistry.

Breaking the color barrier also happened on national television. Popular shows like The Ed Sullivan Show always led the national conversation with who they aired, so it became a big deal when the Supremes and other African American singers appeared on various segments of his show in the 1960s and 1970s. The Supremes appeared on The Ed Sullivan Show a whopping 17 Sundays in total. African Americans on television were no longer just slaves, comedy foils, servants, or the working-class. They were international stars.


Important breakthroughs would continue on television through the 1960s and 1970s. In 1963 on CBS, Cicely Tyson became the first African American woman to appear as a series regular on a national primetime dramatic TV series, "East Side/West Side." In 1968, Diahann Carroll starred in "Julia," the first African American star of her own series who was not portraying a domestic worker. Norman Lear's TV series brought several more breakthroughs, from the first interracial kiss on national television between two men - Carroll O'Connor as Archie Bunker, and Sammy Davis, Jr, on "All in the Family" in 1972 - and in 1975, the first African American interracial couple in a TV-series cast in "The Jeffersons" with actors Franklin Cover (Caucasian) and Roxie Roker (African American) as Tom and Helen Willis, respectively.

## CHAPTER REVIEW

1. TRUE or FALSE: The Harlem Renaissance also included literature.
  - a. True
  - b. False
2. Langston Hughes is most well-known for his:
  - a. Novels
  - b. Poetry
  - c. Journalism
  - d. Auto-biographies
3. Langston Hughes wrote which of the following:
  - a. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
  - b. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
  - c. *Giovanni's Room*
  - d. *Go Tell It On The Mountain*

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4. Which state did Zora Neale Hurston often use as the backdrop for her stories?
- New York
  - Alabama
  - Missouri
  - Florida
5. Zora Neale Hurston wrote which of the following:
- "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
  - Their Eyes Were Watching God*
  - Giovanni's Room*
  - Go Tell It On The Mountain*
6. Baldwin felt extremely ostracized because he was:
- African American
  - Gay
  - Poor
  - All of the above
7. Baldwin wrote which of the following?
- Giovanni's Room*
  - "Native Son"
  - Go Tell It On The Mountain*
  - All of the above



**African American History: The Untold Stories**, was written to aid young men in America who could benefit from understanding and connecting with their history. An understanding of history helps us to understand who we are while providing direction for who we are capable of becoming. African American History: The Untold Stories was written for African American boys with the interest of providing them insight into a narrative of their forefathers and a more accurate perception of themselves and their potential.

African American History: The Untold Stories is also valuable to educators, individuals who rely upon the events of the past to serve as a guide in preventing repeated past mistakes, and those needing to find the missing gaps to their identity and purpose. The popular and currently told version of American history is missing large segments of the true American History story.

This book connects young African American boys and others to the true history of African Americans here in America. It's the true American History story – untold stories will inspire the reader to achieve to their fullest potential and to work towards a more united, equitable and just America. Our nation has lived in the shameful shadows of the past, in this book the truths are unveiled which will allow us to live more peaceful and harmoniously while demonstrating our greatness in leadership.



Yvette Long is the Founder and Executive Director of Platinum Minds, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization focused on working with boys and young men from challenged communities. The organization, founded in 2009, provides educational and leadership development skills to boys in sixth through twelfth grades. Platinum Minds also has a reading and mentoring component for younger boys in kindergarten to fifth grades.

As part of the educational and leadership component, the older boys are provided support to stay on a high academic track and to develop leadership skills, community consciousness, and entrepreneurial skills to help foster self-confidence and self-esteem. Yvette's twelve years of experience working with boys and young men have taught her a deeper understanding of what motivates, inspires, and also disenfranchises young men from excelling to their fullest potential.

Yvette holds certifications in counseling and teaching. She holds additional certifications to teach psychology and meditation. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and Psychology from Thomas Edison State College and a Master's degree in Student Guidance Services from Montclair State University.

Yvette is passionate about the issues preventing individuals from achieving their true potential in life. She has spent a great deal of time volunteering for various organizations as her way of helping to ensure that those with the desire for a better life have the opportunity to realize their dreams. Yvette is the proud recipient of a number of awards, including the Boy Scouts of America Tribute to Women Award (recognized for excellence in working with boys), the Model Citizen Award for New Jersey, and the Outstanding Professional Counselor award from Montclair State University. Yvette lives in Morris County with her husband and their two daughters.

Yvette is also the Founder of Aspire, a counseling and life coaching service aimed at helping young men and individuals acquire the self-esteem and self-awareness they need to be successful on personal and professional levels.

This is her second book, following her earlier one titled "Aspire to Excellence: "Helping Young Men Make Better Choices," available on Amazon.com.



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