Reclaiming Black Ancestral Stories with AI & Full-Text Search on FamilySearch

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Objectives

- Review key methodology for African American genealogical research
- Introduce FamilySearch A.I. and Full-Text Search tools
- Explain best practices for using Full-Text Search
- Demonstrate ways to find enslaved persons and Free People of Color with Full-Text Search
- Enable you to gather and connect your family members in FamilySearch Family Tree

10 Steps to Reclaiming Your African Roots

1. Write down what you know.
2. Find artifacts around the home.
3. Interview relatives.
4. Create a FamilySearch account.
5. Create your own family tree.
6. Search for existing ancestors.
7. Look for blanks in your family tree.
8. Search for historical records.
9. Add photos and stories.
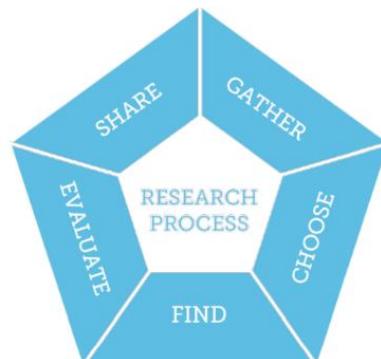10. Work together as a family.

Scan this code to download the booklet

https://familysearch.brightspotcdn.com/83/76/5a3373aac7085cb650d7bcb870b0/a-guide-to-navigating-african-american-genealogy.pdf

Methodology

- **After 1865**
  - Follow the standard research process
- **Before 1865**
  - If your ancestor was free, follow the standard research process for your ancestor
  - If your ancestor was enslaved, *identify the slaveholder*, then follow the standard research process *for the slaveholder*

The Standard Research Process

- **Gather** known information—start with yourself, then ask your relatives
- **Choose** a research goal—ask a specific question
- **Find** new information—search historical records
- **Evaluate** new information—decide what the evidence means and whether it is reliable
- **Share** new information—learn even more

African American Sources

Seek out records that specifically mention African Americans
- Newspapers
- Slave narratives
- Records of the Freedmen's Bureau
- Records of the Freedman's Bank
- Census records (especially 1870-1950)
- Vital records
- Land and property records

- Military records
- Probate records
- Church records
- Cemetery records
- Court records
- Manuscript collections

Key Records by Century

20th Century (1900s)	U.S. federal census records (1900-1950)
	Vital records
	Military records
	Social Security records (after 1937)
	Newspapers
19th Century (1800s)	U.S. federal census records (1870-1880)
	Vital records
	Military records
	Freedmen's Bureau
	Freedman's Bank
	Land and probate records
	Manuscript collections
18th Century (1700s)	Land and property records
	Probate records
	Tax records
	Manuscript collections

FamilySearch Resources – Highlights

African American Genealogy (includes links to many collections housed in the library)
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Genealogy

Southern States Slavery and Bondage Collections (library collections listed by county and state)
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Southern_States_Slavery_and_Bondage_Collections

African American Online Genealogy Records (links to many online databases)
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Online_Genealogy_Records

The Quick Guide to African American Records
https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Quick_Guide_to_African_American_Records

The Freedmen's Bureau records
http://www.discoverfreedmen.org/

The Freedman's Bank records
https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1417695

African American Digital Bookshelf (digital copies of books to aid in your search)
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/African_American_Digital_Bookshelf

Full-Text Search
https://www.familysearch.org/search/full-text

A.I. and Full-Text Search

Filter by race
- African American landing page: https://www.familysearch.org/en/united-states/ethnicities/african-american
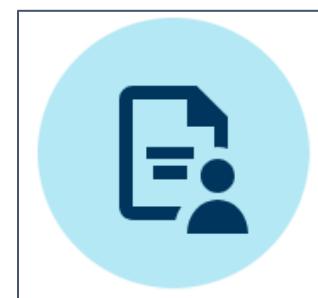- Filter by race under "Add Ancestor Information" in the right-hand search menu in search results
- Filter by race under "Filtered results" in top left corner of search results.

Add Ancestor Information

NAME   ALTERNATE NAME   SEX   RACE
MARITAL STATUS   RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD

Filtered Results (2)

Collection: Censuses & Lists, United States Census, 1900 (2) ✕

Collection   Sex   Race   Birth   Marriage   Residence

Record hints
- View on FamilySearch Family Tree pedigree and person pages

Record Hints icon

Discovery Search
- FamilySearch not-logged-in home page
  - Historical records
  - Family Tree profiles
  - Memories
  - Last name information
  - All of the above

AI Research Assistant
- Grow your tree
  - Have the computer find people to add from indexed historical records
- Provide answers to questions
  - Select a question or type your own
- Suggest additional resources

Full-Text Search
- Direct link: https://www.familysearch.org/search/full-text
  - Access to billions of un-indexed document images
  - Search every word in the text
  - Use different parameters to find exact words and phrases
  - Focus search to include specific years, record types, locations, and collections
  - Search directly from FamilySearch Catalog or Search menu

Full-Text Search icon

Best Practices for Using Full-Text Search
Find words or phrases:

- Elijah Taylor = Elijah OR Taylor
- "Elijah Taylor" = Elijah AND Taylor within a word or so of each other
- +Elijah +Taylor = Elijah AND Taylor on the same image
- +Elijah -Taylor = Elijah BUT NOT WITH Taylor on the same image

Wildcards replace certain letters:

- **?** replaces one letter (Ta?lor = Taylor, Tailor, Taelor)
- * replaces multiple letters or no letters (Ta*r = Tar, Taylor, Tamer, Tanner, Taber, Tapper)

Additional tips:

Try searching for the name of the person you are interested in by putting their name in quotes in the name field and leaving all other fields blank. Then, filter by place – country, state, county. If you still have too many results, filter by years. Then, try adding additional words or phrases as keywords or searching with wildcards and alternate spellings. Keep filtering until you have a manageable number of matches. Look at every result. You never know when your ancestor might be mentioned!

When searching for enslaved individuals, use the slaveholder (or potential slaveholder) as the main search. Put his or her name in quotes, then filter by place. Add +Negro, +slave, or other search terms. You can also try adding the first name of the enslaved person after the + sign.

Search Tips

To reduce the number of search results, use the filters in the upper left under the Results number. You can also include the following in your searches:

Find an exact word or phrase
Use quotation marks. Example: "Henry Jones"

Include a specific word or phrase
Use the + symbol. Example: +Judith

Exclude a specific word or phrase
Use the - symbol. Example: -John

Find different spellings
Use the ? symbol. Example: Jens?n will return Jensen and Jenson

Find different forms of a root word
Use the * symbol. Example: Car* will match car, cars, carriage, carpenter, etc.

When searching for Free People of Color, try putting that in quotes in the keyword field. Add + and their first name. Remember that it is very important to filter by place. Try searching court records.

Gather and Connect Your Family in FamilySearch Family Tree

Use the "Other Relationships" feature to add enslaved individuals mentioned in historical records to Family Tree, even if you don't know their full names. This will allow the computer to assign a personal identification number to them so you can link people together if you know their relationships. You can also add source material and memories.

Other Relationships

+ ADD OTHER RELATIONSHIP

Enslavement

Enslaved Person
Daniel
Deceased • GYNC-7RF

Schedule a Free Online Genealogy Consultation

If you would like help with a specific research problem, we invite you to sign up for a free online genealogy consultation. Go to: https://go.oncehub.com/ResearchStrategySession, then select "United States and Canada," then select, "United States African American Ancestors." Select your time zone, then choose a consultation time that works for you! You will receive a link to a Zoom meeting for your selected time. During your meeting, you will have 20 minutes to discuss your research question with a research specialist. The specialist will outline some next steps you can take in your research journey.