

# FINDING BLACK ANCESTORS

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1. Where Do I Begin?
  - a. Start with what you know – oral history, family records
  - b. What do you want to find out?
  - c. Use sound genealogical research practices and proof standards
  
2. Understand the history of the time frame you're researching
  - a. Slavery of Africans existed in America since at least as early as 1619
  - b. Enslaved persons had no legal rights
  - c. Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 - unlawful to aid suspected runaways
  - d. Slavery Ended
    - In northern states such as Michigan, Penn, NY, OH, prior to 1865
    - Michigan's state constitution approved in 1835 prohibited slavery
    - In Canada in 1834
    - In America in 1865 at end of Civil War
  - e. Not all Blacks were enslaved
    - Free Blacks, run aways and fugitives, Underground Railroad
  
3. What resources are available to research?
  - a. Census records
    - former enslaved persons were first recorded in census in 1870
    - 1850 and 1860 census slave schedules recorded gender and age – no names
  - b. Vital records – enslaved persons were generally not recorded
  - c. Court and Probate records – wills
  - d. Military records, Civil War USCT service and pension files
  - e. Freedman's Bureau records – created in 1865 after Civil War, recorded marriages, work agreements, bank transactions, legal disputes
  - f. Newspapers: Run away ads, colored sections, ads seeking displaced family members
  
4. Resources
  - a. Afrigeneas, African Ancestored Genealogy: [www.afrigeneas.com](http://www.afrigeneas.com)
  - b. Freedmen's Bureau Records: [www.discoverfreedmen.org](http://www.discoverfreedmen.org)
  - c. Civil War service record index: <https://www.nps.gov/civilwar/soldiers-and-sailors-database.htm>
  - d. Digital Library on American Slavery: <https://library.uncg.edu/slavery/>
  - e. Reclaiming Kin: <https://www.reclaimingkin.com>
  - f. The Beyond Kin Project: <https://beyondkin.org>
  - g. Tony Burroughs, *Black Roots: A Beginner's Guide to Tracing the African American Family Tree*, (New York, Fireside Book, 2001)