

The 1619 Project

An Aphasia-Friendly Text

Nikole Hannah-Jones



**BLACK APHASIA
WORKING GROUP**

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Origins by Nikole Hannah-Jones



Introduction

In **1619**, a ship arrived in **Virginia** carrying **20 to 30** **enslaved Africans**.

This was **before** the United States became a country. This event **began slavery in America**.

Slavery **lasted for 250 years** and shaped many parts of American life. It affected:

The economy (how money was made)

Laws (rules people had to follow)

Schools (education)

Music and culture

Health care

Elections and voting

Even though **the United States declared independence in 1776**, slavery still existed. Black Americans have fought for freedom **for hundreds of years**.

What year did the first enslaved Africans arrive in America?

A Father's Pride

The author's father always flew a **clean, new** American flag outside their **old, broken** house. Born in **Mississippi** when **Black people** had no rights, he moved **north** for a better life but still faced **unfair treatment**.



He joined the **Army** at **17**, hoping for **equality**, but even there he didn't receive fair chances. After leaving the Army, he struggled in **service jobs**. As a child, the author felt **embarrassed** by his **pride** in America, not understanding how he could **love** a country that treated Black people badly.

Later, she realized something important:

Black Americans have helped build the country.
They fought to make democracy real.
They deserve to call America their home.

Why did the author's father fly an American flag?

- a) He was forced to
- b) He was proud of the nation that Black people had built



The Beginning of Slavery

The first **enslaved Africans** in America were taken from **Angola**. They were kidnapped, put on ships, and brought to **Virginia**.

Slavery was:

- **The largest forced migration in history** (millions of Africans taken).
- **A brutal system** (people were treated as property).
- **A way to make money** (enslaved people worked in fields, homes, and businesses).

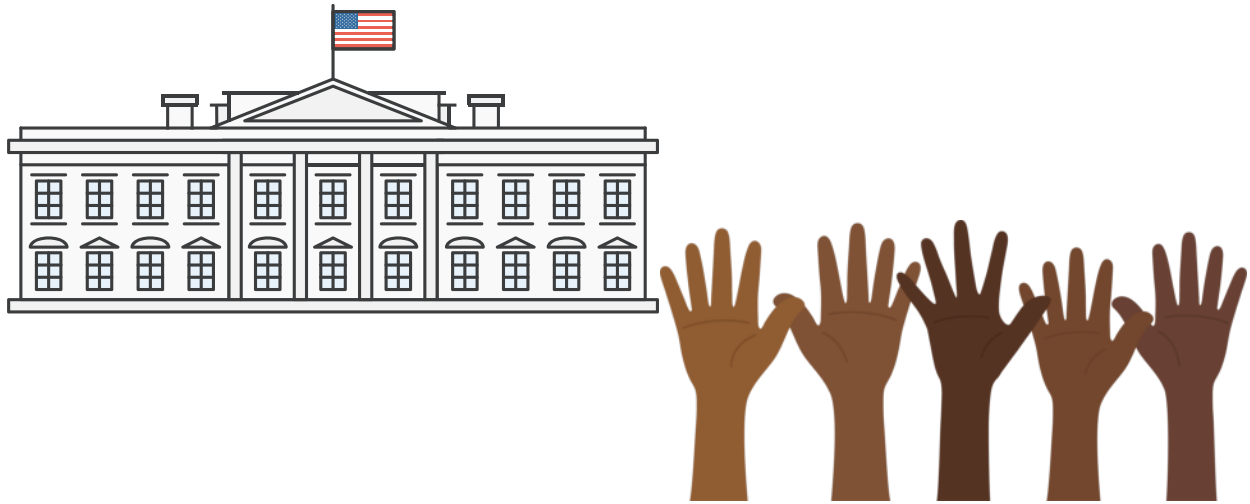
Slaves built America:

They cleared land and farmed crops.

They grew **cotton**, which became **the most important product** in America.

What crop did Black Americans grow?

- a) Corn
- b) Cotton
- c) Wheat
- d) Rice



Slavery made white people rich, but **Black people were not paid for their work**. Even after slavery ended, **they faced racism and unfair laws**.

Slaves built the White House and the U.S. Capitol.
They helped create the banking and trade systems.

What did Black Americans help with?

- a) Built things
- b) Grew crops
- c) Helped democracy
- d) All of these

Black Americans: The True Founders

The **Declaration of Independence (1776)** says "all men are created equal."

But the white leaders did **not** believe this applied to **Black people**.

Black Americans fought for freedom in every war.

The first person to die in the **American Revolution** was a Black man: **Crispus Attucks**.

Even when they were denied rights, Black Americans believed in democracy.

They helped bring **freedom** to other groups:

- Women
- Immigrants
- Disabled people
- LGBTQ+ communities

Without Black Americans, the United States **would not be a democracy today**.



What was the name of the first Black man to die in the American Revolution?

- a) Frederick Douglass
- b) Crispus Attucks
- c) Booker T. Washington

Who did Black Americans help get freedom?

- a) Women
- b) Immigrants
- c) Disabled people
- d) All of these

What did Black Americans believe in?

- a) Freedom
- b) Democracy
- c) Equality
- d) Justice



Understanding the Past

The **Constitution** was written to protect slavery:

- It counted enslaved people as **property**.
- It did **not** mention slavery, but **protected it in secret ways**.
- Ten of the first twelve **presidents** owned slaves.

Even after **slavery ended**, white people created **new laws** to keep Black people from having power. These included:

Voting restrictions

Segregation (separating Black and white people)

Unfair treatment in jobs and schools

But Black Americans **kept fighting for their rights**.

1619 – Ship arrives in Virginia 🚢

1776 – Declaration of Independence 📜

1787 – U.S. Constitution & slavery ^^

1861-1865 – Civil War & Emancipation ⚔️

1865 – 13th Amendment ends slavery ☑️

1896 – Segregation legalized (Plessy v. Ferguson) 🚫

1964-1965 – Civil Rights Act & Voting Rights Act 📄

Today – Ongoing fight for justice

Sugar by Khalil Gibran Muhammad

Sugar and Slavery

Sugar was once one of the **most valuable crops** in the world.
But it came at a cost.

Enslaved Africans were
forced to **plant and cut**
sugarcane

Sugar plantations were
extremely dangerous

Workers were beaten and
many **died young**



In the U.S., sugar was grown mostly in **Louisiana**

What crop did enslaved people grow that was very valuable?

- a) Corn
- b) Sugar
- c) Bananas

Sugar Made White People Rich

The sugar trade made many people **very rich**, including:

Plantation owners

Bankers

Traders

Government officials

Enslaved people **did the hard labor**, but they got **nothing**.

They were treated like **machines**, not people.



Who got rich from the sugar trade?

- a) The enslaved workers
- b) The people who owned the land
- c) The children in school

Sugar and Health Today

Today, sugar is **everywhere** — in food and drinks.

Too much sugar can lead to:

- **Diabetes**
- **Heart disease**
- Other serious health problems



Black communities often have **higher rates** of these diseases.

This connects back to the **history of slavery and poverty**.

What can too much sugar cause?

- a) Stronger bones
- b) Better sleep
- c) Diabetes and health problems

The Legacy of Sugar

Sugar helped build parts of the U.S. economy.

But it also:

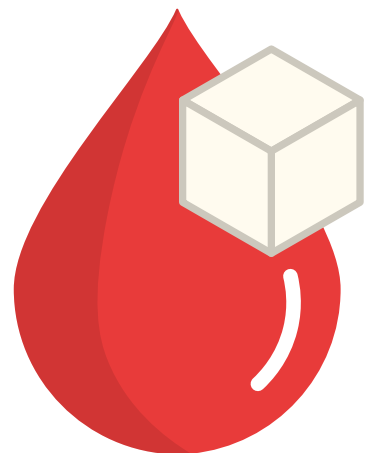
Hurt Black bodies

Shaped health problems we still see today

Shows how slavery and racism still **affect lives now**

What does the history of sugar show us?

- a) That Black workers were treated well
- b) That sugar had no impact
- c) That slavery and racism still affect health and wealth today



Capitalism by Matthew Desmond

What Is Capitalism?

Capitalism is how people and businesses make money. In America, it often means:

Big profits for the rich

Low pay and hard jobs for others

Big gaps between rich and poor



America is not the only country with capitalism. But **American capitalism is often more unfair** than in other places.

For example:

Workers have fewer rights

Bosses can fire people easily

Poor people stay poor for longer

Questions:

- Is capitalism about money and work? **Yes / No?**
- Do all countries have the same kind of capitalism? **Yes / No ?**

Where Did American Capitalism Start?

Many parts of **American capitalism** started on **slave plantations**.

In the 1800s, cotton was the most valuable product.

Cotton was picked by **enslaved Black people**.

These plantations were **run like big businesses**.

People used:

Strict rules to control workers

Detailed records to track how much was picked

Punishments to force people to work harder



Where did American capitalism get many of its ideas?

- a) Grocery stores
- b) Slave plantations
- c) Factories in Europe

How Were Enslaved People Treated?

Enslaved people were:

Watched all day

Given goals for how much cotton to pick

Whipped if they didn't meet those goals

Sold and used as **collateral** (like money)



Even children were forced to work. Some people were given **quotas** (work goals) based on how much they picked the day before.

Did enslaved people get paid for their work? **Yes / No ?**

Were they punished for picking too little cotton? **Yes / No?**

How Did Banks Use Slavery?

Banks gave out **loans** to plantation owners.

These loans were backed by **enslaved people** as property.

If a plantation owner couldn't pay the bank, the bank could take their enslaved workers.

Some **American banks** and even **European banks** got rich this way.

Slavery helped build:

Banks

Insurance companies

Wall Street (New York's financial center)



What did banks use as collateral for loans?

- a) Land
- b) Cotton
- c) Enslaved people

What Happened When Cotton Prices Dropped?

In the 1830s, people **borrowed too much money**.
They thought cotton prices would stay high forever.
When cotton prices fell:

Many plantation owners **could not pay back loans**

Banks **lost money**

This caused a big **financial crash** in 1837

This is like the 2008 housing crisis, when many people lost their homes.

Did borrowing too much money cause a crisis? **Yes / No**

Did the price of cotton always stay high? **Yes / No**



How Does This Affect Today?

The systems made during slavery still affect us.

Black workers were never paid for generations of work.

Many **white families built wealth** from slavery.

Black families were left behind.

Today:

Black people still face unfair wages and working conditions.

Big businesses still track every move of workers, just like plantations once did.



What was **NOT** caused by slavery?

- a) Cotton profits
- b) Banks and Wall Street
- c) Equal pay for all

Politics by Jamelle Bouie

What Is a Democracy?

A **democracy** is a government where:

People **vote** for leaders

Everyone has **equal rights**

The majority decides, but
everyone's voice matters



But in America, it **didn't work that way for everyone.**

For a long time, **Black people could not vote.**

Even today, some people try to **stop Black voting.**

What is a democracy?

- a) One person makes all the rules
- b) People vote and have rights
- c) Only rich people lead

The Constitution and Voting

The U.S. Constitution did **not** give voting rights to everyone.
Most early leaders:

Wanted only **white men with land** to vote

Feared **Black power** and freedom



Even after slavery ended, white leaders made **new laws** to stop Black people from voting.

Who could vote in the early U.S.?

- a) Everyone
- b) Only white men with land
- c) Only women

Black Americans Fought for Voting

After slavery, **Black men voted** and even became elected leaders.

But white leaders felt threatened.

So they created new **voting restrictions**, like:

Poll taxes (paying to vote)

Literacy tests (reading tests)

Violence and threats

What stopped Black people from voting?

- a) Free education
- b) Reading books
- c) Poll taxes and tests



Still Fighting Today

Even now, some states:

Make **voting harder**

Close voting places in Black Areas
Black areas

Take away voting rights from people in prison
(who are often Black)

Black Americans have **always fought** for the right to vote.

**What is one way states
still block voting?**

- a) Give free rides to vote
- b) Close voting places
- c) Give money to voters



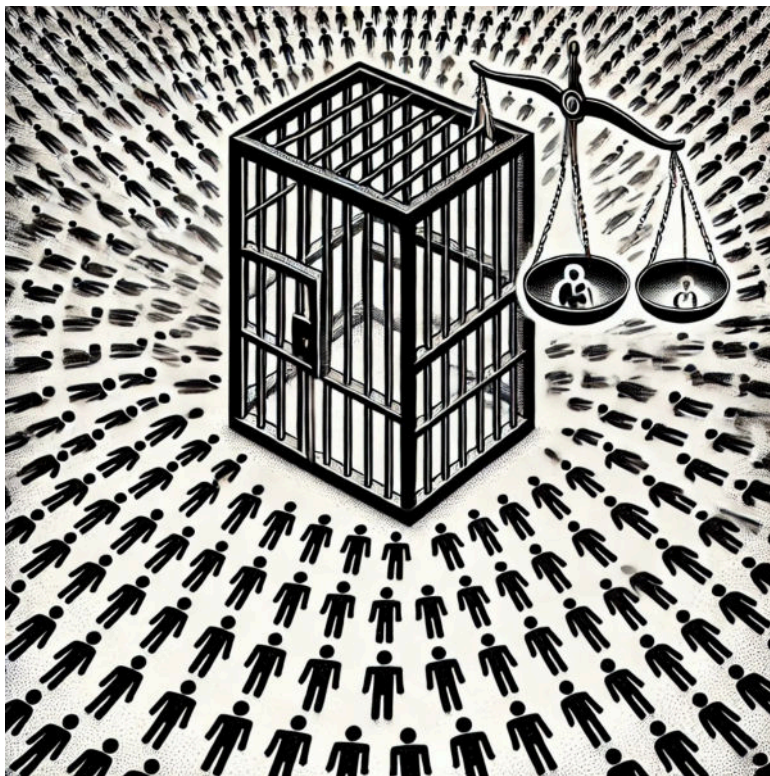
Punishment by Bryan Stevenson

What Is Mass Incarceration?

Incarceration means putting someone in **jail or prison**.

Mass incarceration means putting **millions** of people in prison.

In the U.S., more people are in prison than in any other country.
A huge number are Black — even though Black people are only 13% of the population.



What does “mass incarceration” mean?

- a) Helping people get jobs
- b) Putting many people in prison
- c) Going to church

How Did This Happen?

After slavery ended, new laws were made to **keep control** of Black people.

Police arrested Black people for small things

Black prisoners were **forced to work**

New crimes were created to target Black communities

Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, the “**War on Drugs**” led to:

Longer prison sentences

More arrests in Black neighborhoods

More broken families



What did the “War on Drugs” do?

- a) Brought people together
- b) Helped Black people avoid prison
- c) Caused more arrests and long sentences

Jail and Justice Are Not Equal

In the U.S., poor people and Black people are more likely to:

Be arrested

Be punished harder

Get bad lawyers or no help at all

White people who do the same things are often **treated better**.



Who is most likely to get treated unfairly in court?

- a) Rich white people
- b) Black and poor people
- c) Police officers

Fighting for Justice

Many people are working for change.

They want:

Shorter sentences

Better lawyers for poor people

More fairness in courts and prisons

The goal is to build a **justice system that treats all people equally.**

What does Bryan Stevenson fight for?

- a) More prisons
- b) Fairness and justice
- c) Longer jail time



Inheritance by Trymaine Lee

What Is the Wealth Gap?

Wealth means everything you own — like money, a house, or land.

The **wealth gap** is the big difference between how much money **white families** have compared to **Black families**.

On average:

White families have **10 times more wealth** than Black families

This gap has stayed the same for many years



What is a “wealth gap”?

- a) A game about money
- b) A difference in how much people own
- c) A kind of store

Why Is There a Gap?

This gap started long ago:

Enslaved people were never paid for their labor

After slavery, Black people were blocked from owning land or getting loans

White families built wealth, while Black families were **left out**

Even in the 1900s, **Black people were denied homes** through racist policies like **redlining**.

Why do white families have more wealth?

- a) They got help building it
- b) Black people didn't work hard
- c) They always shared money



What Is Redlining?

Redlining was when banks and the government:

Drew red lines on maps around **Black neighborhoods**

Refused to give loans or home insurance to Black families

Told white people not to live near Black people

This made it hard for Black people to buy homes and **pass down wealth**.

What did redlining do?

- a) Gave free homes to all
- b) Helped Black families buy land
- c) Blocked Black people from getting home loans

The Wealth Gap Today

Even now:

Black families are less likely to **own homes**

They have **less savings**

They face more **job discrimination**

But many are working to **build wealth** and demand **fair opportunities**.

What is one result of the wealth gap today?

- a) Everyone earns the same
- b) Black families often have less money and fewer homes
- c) All families share their savings



Music by Wesley Morris

Music Created by Black Americans

Much of the music we hear today comes from **Black culture**.
Black Americans created or shaped:

Blues

Jazz

Rock and roll

Hip-hop

Pop and R&B



But many Black artists were **not paid fairly**.
White people often **took credit** and made the money.

Who helped create American music?

- a) Only white singers
- b) Black Americans
- c) European musicians

From Pain to Power

Many songs came from **Black struggle and pain**.

During slavery, people sang **spirituals** for hope.

In hard times, music helped people feel **strong**.

In cities, young Black people created new sounds.

Black music is about **survival, freedom, and joy**.

Why did Black people sing spirituals and blues?

- a) For fun only
- b) To pass the time
- c) To deal with pain and find hope



White Artists Took the Spotlight

In the 1900s and 2000s, white artists often:

Copied Black music styles

Got played more on the radio

Made **more money**

For example:

Elvis Presley got rich from a style that came from Black artists



What did many white artists do with Black music?

- a) Helped protect it
- b) Copied it and made money
- c) Forgot about it

Black Music Shapes the World

Even with unfair treatment, **Black artists changed the world.**

Their music spread across the globe

It shaped how we dress, dance, and talk

New generations still build on it

Today, **hip-hop** is one of the most powerful art forms — and it began with **Black youth.**

What is one music style that came from Black youth?

- a) Country
- b) Classical
- c) Hip-hop



Health Care by Jeneen Interlandi

After Slavery Ended

When slavery ended, many Black people had no homes or jobs. They lived in **poor camps** with little food or clean water. Diseases like **smallpox** spread quickly.

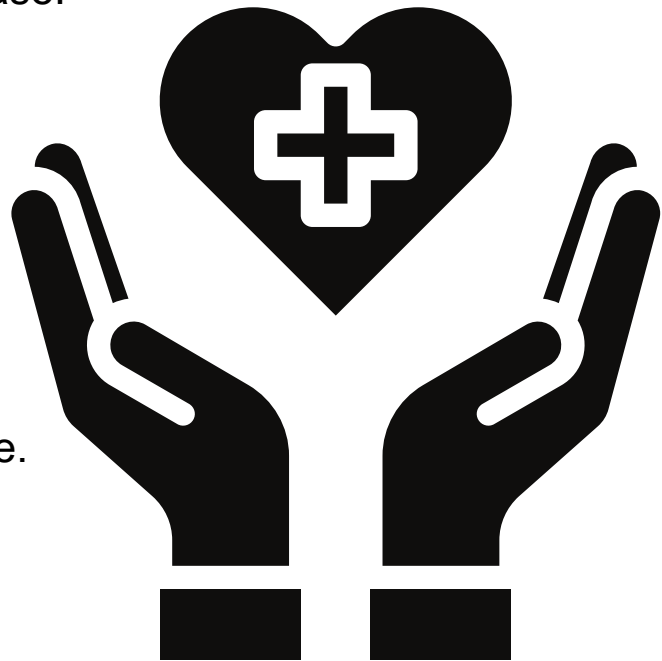
White leaders knew how to stop the disease:

Clean water

Doctors and nurses

Vaccines (shots)

But they did not want to help Black people.



What happened after slavery ended?

- a) Black people got free health care
- b) Black people lived in poor, sick places
- c) Black people got new houses

The First Health Care Program

The U.S. created the **Freedmen's Bureau**.
This was the **first health program** for Black people.
But it was very small.

Only **120 doctors** for the whole South

Only a few hospitals

Most were shut down quickly

Some white people said:

Black people should work harder
instead of get help

Black people were too sick to survive freedom

What was the Freedmen's Bureau?

- a) A school program
- b) A health program for Black people
- c) A voting group



Black Doctors Fight Back

One Black woman doctor, **Rebecca Lee Crumpler**, spoke out.
She was the **first Black woman doctor in the U.S.**

She said:

Black people get sick because they are **poor**

They need real care, not blame

Health care should help all people

Who was Rebecca Lee Crumpler?

- a) A teacher
- b) A lawyer
- c) A doctor



Unfair Health Laws

In the 1900s, health care stayed unfair.

Black workers were left out of health insurance.

Many **Black nurses and doctors** could not work in white hospitals.

New hospitals got money, but they could still **segregate** (separate) people.

The government made rules that helped white people more than Black people.

What was one problem for Black doctors and nurses?

- a) They earned too much money
- b) They could not work in white hospitals
- c) They did not want to help



Fighting for Health Rights

Black communities made their own systems:

They **raised money** to build clinics

They taught about **clean water and food**

They made their own **health groups**

This helped many people stay alive and healthy.

They kept fighting for equal care.

How did Black communities help themselves?

- a) They built their own health systems
- b) They moved to new countries
- c) They gave up



Traffic by Kevin M. Kruse

Why Do We Have So Much Traffic?

In many U.S. cities, people spend **hours in traffic** each week. Highways cut through **Black neighborhoods**. This was **not an accident**. It was a **plan**.

In the 1950s, the U.S. built highways across the country. White leaders used this to:

Help white people move to the suburbs

Destroy Black communities in city centers



Why were highways built through Black neighborhoods?

- a) To make cities pretty
- b) To help Black families
- c) To break up Black communities

Highways and Segregation

Some cities had **public buses and trains**, but white people didn't want to share them.

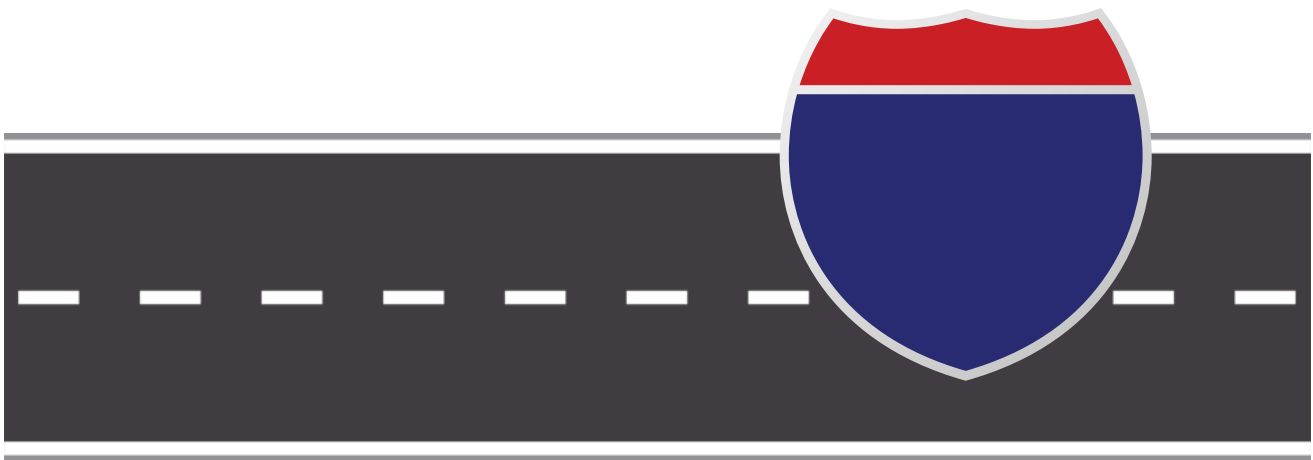
So they moved to **white-only suburbs**.

Highways made it easy for white families to:

Leave the city

Keep Black people out

This kept Black families in poor neighborhoods without good services.



How did highways help white families?

- a) Let them move to suburbs
- b) Helped them vote
- c) Gave them free food

What Happened to Black Neighborhoods?

To build highways, cities:

Tore down Black homes

Closed Black businesses

Displaced (moved) thousands of Black families

These communities were called “**slums**” by white leaders, but many had strong businesses, churches, and schools.



What did cities destroy to build highways?

- a) Parks
- b) Black neighborhoods
- c) Factories

The Results Today

Today:

Black people often **live farther** from jobs

They have **longer commutes**

Their neighborhoods still have **less money** and **fewer buses or trains**

Traffic is not just about cars — it shows **how racism shaped cities.**



Why do many Black people have long commutes today?

- a) They enjoy driving
- b) Their neighborhoods were pushed far away
- c) They work from home

Hope by Djeneba Aduayom

What Is Hope?

Hope means believing that things can get better — even when life is hard.

For Black Americans, hope has always been a powerful tool.

Hope helped people survive slavery

Hope kept families strong through injustice

Hope continues today in the fight for **freedom and fairness**

What does “hope” mean?

- a) Giving up
- b) Believing things can get better
- c) Ignoring problems



Seeing Black Joy and Beauty

Djeneba Aduayom is a **photographer**.
She takes pictures that show:

Black beauty

Black strength

Black dreams and creativity



Her photos tell stories that are often **left out** of history.

What does Djeneba Aduayom do?

- a) Paint houses
- b) Take photos of Black life
- c) Write laws

Why Images Matter

For many years, the media showed Black people in **negative ways**.

But Aduayom's work helps people:

Feel **seen and respected**

Celebrate their **culture and history**

Believe in a better future



Images of hope remind us: **Black lives matter** and are **full of light**

Why are photos of Black people important?

- a) To make them feel bad
- b) To ignore their stories
- c) To show beauty and inspire hope

Hope for the Future

The 1619 Project is not just about the past.

It's also about the **future we can build** — one with:

Justice

Equality

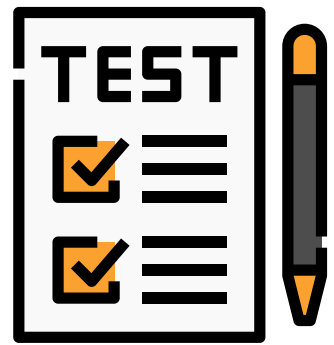
Healing

And that future starts with **hope**.



What does the future need?

- a) More hate
- b) More prisons
- c) More hope and justice



Knowledge Check: What Did You Learn?

1. Slavery in America

What year did the first enslaved Africans arrive in America?

- a) 1492
- b) 1619
- c) 1776
- d) 1865

What crop did many enslaved people grow?

- a) Wheat
- b) Sugar
- c) Cotton
- d) Corn

Did slavery make white people rich?

Yes / No

2. Black Americans and Democracy

Who was the first Black person to die in the American Revolution?

- a) Crispus Attucks
- b) Frederick Douglass
- c) Rosa Parks

What did Black Americans fight for?

- a) Power
- b) Democracy
- c) Land

3. Unfair Laws After Slavery

Did the Constitution protect slavery in secret ways?

Yes / No

From the list below, what were some unfair things Black people faced after slavery?

- a) Segregation
- b) Voting restrictions
- c) Equal pay
- d) Unfair jobs and schools

4. Sugar and Slavery

What crop made white people rich and caused many to suffer?

- a) Sugar
- b) Bananas
- c) Corn

Who did the hard work on sugar plantations?

- a) The owners
- b) Enslaved people

5. Capitalism and Slavery

Where did American capitalism get many ideas?

- a) Factories in Europe
- b) Grocery stores
- c) Slave plantations

6. Voting and Politics

What is a democracy?

- a) One person makes rules
- b) People vote and have rights
- c) Only rich people lead

Who could vote in early U.S. history?

- a) Everyone
- b) Only white men with land

7. Punishment and Prison

Who is more likely to be treated unfairly in court?

- a) Poor Black people
- b) Rich white people

8. Wealth Gap

What is the “wealth gap”?

- a) A difference in how much people own
- b) A kind of game

What is “redlining”?

- a) Giving loans to everyone
- b) Blocking Black families from getting homes

9. Music

Who created many styles of American music?

- a) European composers
- b) Black Americans

10. Health Care

What happened to Black people's health after slavery?

- a) They got free homes
- b) They lived in poor places and got sick

11. Traffic and Cities

Why were highways built through Black neighborhoods?

- a) To break up communities
- b) To help everyone

12. Hope

What does "hope" mean?

- a) Giving up
- b) Believing things can get better

Why are photos of Black people important?

- a) To show beauty and hope
- b) To ignore problems

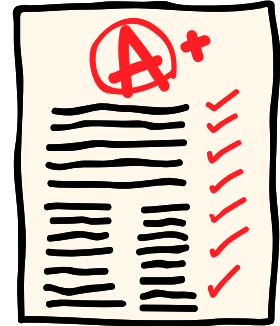
✓ Knowledge Check Answer Sheet

1. Slavery in America

First enslaved Africans arrived: b) 1619

Crop enslaved people grew: c) Cotton

Did slavery make white people rich?: Yes



2. Black Americans and Democracy

First Black person to die in Revolution: a) Crispus Attucks

What did Black Americans fight for?: b) Democracy

Who did they help get freedom?: d) All of these

3. Unfair Laws After Slavery

Did Constitution protect slavery in secret ways?: Yes

Unfair things Black people faced: a, b, d

(Segregation, Voting restrictions, Unfair jobs and schools)

4. Sugar and Slavery

Valuable crop: a) Sugar

5. Capitalism and Slavery

Where ideas came from: c) Slave plantations

6. Voting and Politics

What is democracy?: b) People vote and have rights

7. Punishment and Prison

Who is treated unfairly in court?: a) Poor Black people

8. Wealth Gap

What is the wealth gap?: a) A difference in how much people own

What is redlining?: b) Blocking Black families from getting homes

9. Music

Who created American music styles?: b) Black Americans

10. Health Care

What happened after slavery?: b) They lived in poor places and got sick

11. Traffic and Cities

Why build highways through Black areas?: a) To break up communities

12. Hope

What does hope mean?: b) Believing things can get better

Why are photos important?: c) To show beauty and inspire hope

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Nikole Hannah-Jones