

# Lost In America

1607–1861

**Unit Summary**—In an effort to psychologically weaken the Africans, the colonists took deliberate actions to isolate the enslaved from their cultural roots. Enslaved Africans discovered that their traditions, cultures, languages—even their names—were unwelcome in Colonial America. In spite of these difficult circumstances, many Africans showed their resilience and firmly held onto memories of their cultural traditions. (Chapter 8)

As prejudice against Africans grew, the practice of classifying people by skin color was born. Whiteness became a badge of advantage, while blackness was the badge of enslavement. Discriminatory practices evolved into laws that violated the rights of Africans. (Chapter 9)

From Massachusetts to Georgia, colonial legislatures passed laws that legalized enslavement. Africans could be held in permanent servitude for life. Laws were even passed allowing for the enslavement of Native Americans. (Chapter 10)

Additional laws described the conditions under which the enslaved were kept captive. Adhering to the wishes of powerful slaveholders, colonial legislatures developed laws that prescribed how Africans were to dress, live, and even work. These laws served to permanently establish Africans as inferior within the American legal system. (Chapter 11)

Many Africans recorded their life stories for future generations to discover. These memoirs describe a life filled with pain, sorrow, and great suffering. (Chapter 12)

## UNIT 3

### BEFORE YOU READ

All humans share certain basic needs, including the need to belong to a larger group. Usually the family unit satisfies this need.

In this unit, you will discover how Europeans deliberately ripped apart the African family unit in order to isolate the enslaved. You will learn how enslaved Africans drew upon great inner strength and memories of tradition to cope with horrific life in the colonies.

Think about how your need to belong is satisfied by family, friends, and community. How do these support groups help you deal with your own life struggles?

1712

Enslaved Africans revolt in New York City. Nine whites and 21 enslaved Africans are executed.

1730s

Venture Smith (Broteer) is captured in Africa and enslaved.

1737

Broteer enters North America as an enslaved person.

1739

Enslaved Africans revolt at Stono, South Carolina, twenty-five whites are killed.

1745

Olaudah Equiano is born in Benin, Africa.

1773

Phillis Wheatley's poems are published in England.

1798

Olaudah Equiano publishes his slave narrative.

1849–1861

Henson, Tubman and Jacobs publish slave narratives.

1700

1720

1740

1760

1850

1688

The Quakers organize the first formal protest against enslavement in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

1715

North Carolina passes a law that gives the colony complete control of Africans.

1721

Delaware formalizes the institution of enslavement.

1740

South Carolina passes legislation to enslave Native Americans and Africans.

1750

Laws are permanently in place to establish Africans as inferior.

1755

Slave codes are introduced in Georgia.

1689

The English Bill of Rights is used as a model for the U.S. Bill of Rights.

1699

The French establish settlements in Louisiana.

1739–1748

Spanish colonies fight England.

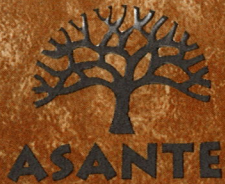
1757–1763

Great Britain and France fight for control of India in the Seven Year War.

1760

George III becomes King of England.



**AS YOU READ**

- Why are names powerful?
- Why did dislocation lead to decentering in some Africans?
- What actions did the colonists take to deliberately separate enslaved Africans from their culture?
- How is decentering related to self-hatred?
- How does preserving one's cultural memories foster a strong sense of self and personal value?
- What survival skills did Africans draw upon while enduring enslavement?
- What role does African culture and history play in defining the culture of African Americans?

# Dislocated and Decentered

## Chapter Outline

- The Power of Names
- Dislocation
- The Loss of Names, Languages, and Cultures
- Decentering
- Preserving Cultural Memories
- Survival Skills
- African Americans Form a New Culture

### Vocabulary

- names • colonial America • enslaved Africans • dislocation
- ancestral lineage • Ebonics • rites of passage • centered • decentering
- stereotype • bias • griots • arokins • homogeneous • African Americans

## The Power of Names

**Names** carry meanings, good or bad. They are powerful labels that can affect one's thinking and mood. Names even affect a person's behavior toward others and how people think of themselves. As the twin system of enslavement and racism developed in **colonial America**, the names given to people, places, and events took on added meaning.

There is even significance in the name *colonial America*. It means that another power had control over the group of people who formed the colonies, such as the one formed at Plymouth Rock in 1620. In the case of colonial America, the major controlling force was Great Britain.

**1619**  
Dislocation begins; Africans are indentured in Jamestown.

**1761**  
Phillis Wheatley is brought to America.

**1620**

Pilgrims arrive in Plymouth.

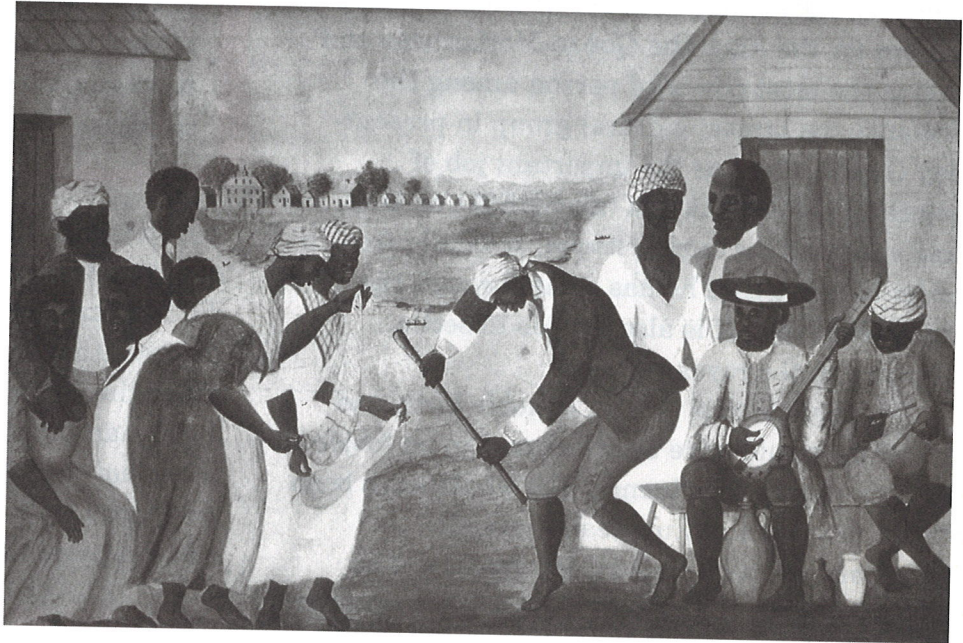
**1773**

Phillis Wheatley's poems are published in England.



With the development of racism or race prejudice, **enslaved Africans**—who represent a wide variety of people from many cultures and many ethnic groups—were forced into enslavement, a brutal form of slavery. Because of racism and the need to justify their actions, Europeans claimed that being white was better than being black; that one race of people was better than another. Over many centuries of interaction with Europeans, the people of Africa were probably referred to as Africans. Now, in colonial America, they were referred to as “blacks,” “slaves,” and other belittling names. Though obviously untrue, the color *black* was used to stand for negative qualities to prove inferiority, while the color *white* was used to denote positive qualities to prove superiority.

In the very same way, the term *slave* implied that Africans were not human, dismissing the significant African contributions to world civilization. This powerful and dehumanizing term not only threatened to rob Africans of their humanity and rich legacy, it also changed the way that slavery was practiced. The term *chattel slave* came into use to reflect the difference between older forms of slavery practiced in Africa and many other nations in the world, and the brutal enslavement that singled out and



*Old Plantation*, a work by noted African American artist Jacob Lawrence, depicts Africans preserving their traditional customs despite their enslavement and dislocation.

dehumanized Africans. Even now, an entire history of inhumanity can be called up with only two words: *black* and *white*.

## Dislocation

Africans, stolen from their homeland and forced into a new life in colonial America, quickly discovered that their traditions and cultures were not welcome in this new land. Separated from loved ones and the familiarity of home, they experienced **dislocation**, a gradual psychological and cultural shift away from the practices and experiences that formed the very center of their lives in Africa.

What would have happened to the Queen Mother of the Ashanti (ah-SHAHN-tee), had she been among the Africans who suffered the horrors of the Middle Passage and landed on the shores of the Americas? Perhaps she would have

## DID YOU KNOW ?



There are more than 130 words in the English language in which the word *black* has a negative definition.



waded from the slave ship onto the shores of Hispaniola (hiss-pan-YOH-lah). Or, she could have been dragged in chains to the first American colony in Virginia after indentureship had gradually changed to enslavement for life. Except for the king, the Queen Mother was and still is the most powerful person among the Ashanti, the largest cultural group in present-day Ghana. She has the important job of selecting the new Akyem (ah-KEEM), or king, and verifying his **ancestral lineage**, or family tree, in order to prove that he has come through the royal blood line. It is also her job to settle disputes in the royal cabinet.

In America, this woman of noble birth and authority would have been reduced to an “object” without power or influence. She would have been forced to submit to European authority.

As an enslaved African, she would not be given the same status as a European woman nor would she be protected from the unwanted advances of European men. Under enslavement, the Queen Mother—African and female—could not have defended herself against her attackers.

In the comfort and security of Africa, the Queen Mother would be a highly respected leader of men and women. In the fertile river country of slave-holding Virginia, the Queen Mother would be powerless.

Because Africans were forced by the Americans to perform specific tasks, the

## DID YOU KNOW ?

Most of the construction workers who built the White House (in 1792 and in 1818 after it was burned by the British) and the Capitol building where Congress meets were enslaved Africans. Of the 650 people working on the construction of the buildings, 400 were enslaved Africans and 50 were free Africans.

Europeans did not care that some of their captives were members of royal families. They did not care that they were often skilled blacksmiths, diplomats, educators, or priests. What the Europeans really needed were Africans to do manual labor. Consequently, Europeans chose not to respect the identity, names, traditions, values, religion, or languages of African people (see *Origins*, pp. A1 and A8).

## The Loss of Names, Languages, and Culture

The changes that caused enslaved Africans to experience dislocation began in 1619. Between 1619 and 1719 there was a strong attempt to stamp out any trace of African culture that might have survived the journey across the Atlantic. Among the first things to go were African names. The Africans who came ashore in 1619 had left Africa with surnames such as Diallo, Nwonko, Awolowo, Obenga, Nyang,

## rites of passage

**R**ites of passage are important events or series of events that mark the coming of age for a boy or girl. In our culture today, a young child entering kindergarten or a teenager graduating from high school is experiencing an important rite of passage. In traditional African cultures, the rites of passage were well-defined ceremonies that marked a person's passage from one stage of life to another. In many African cultures, the various rituals involved in the rites of passage moved the young person from childhood to all of the privileges and responsibilities of adulthood.

In West Africa among the Akan, for example, young boys who were candidates for initiation into adulthood were taken to an area in the forest called the sacred wood. There they had to submit to very strict discipline as they received instruction in customs and traditions, hunting, and sexual education. In this sacred wood, the boys learned what they were responsible for as men. At puberty, young girls also experienced rites of passage ceremonies to learn their responsibilities and roles as productive women in the community. These rites of passage rituals were as varied as the ethnic groups that populated Africa.



Owusu, Asare, Kasavubu, and Amachie. Their African names were changed to European surnames such as Smith, Coleman, Williams, Wilson, Hopkins, Johnson, Taylor, Anderson, Jefferson, Washington, and Simpson. In addition, if you were African and enslaved, your first name could be changed from Toyin to Ted without your permission.

African languages disappeared with the same lightning speed as did African names. Enslaved Africans were severely punished if they were caught speaking their own languages. This forced Africans to learn the languages of the slaveholders, which included English, French, Spanish, or Dutch. In a few generations, more than 100 languages were lost to the Africans who had come to the Americas. In the English colonies, Africans struggling to learn the language of their slaveholders created Black English, a mixture of English words and grammar with African words and grammar. Today this language is called **Ebonics**. Black English helped enslaved Africans to communicate with the colonists and with each other.

Africans were devastated in almost every way by the deliberate efforts of the colonists to separate them from their cultural roots. In Africa, drums were used as an instrument to communicate—to send and receive short messages. These short messages were understood based on the patterns of the sounds. When the colonists outlawed drumming in an attempt to control African revolts, enslaved Africans lost another key cultural element of their lives, music.

Music is central to traditional African culture.

Drums are used on their own or combined with other instruments to produce many different sounds. These various sounds are as unique as the African ethnic groups that produce them, but the drum also has a unifying quality that brings all Africans together. African music inspires movement and dance (see *Origins*, p. A6), which for Africans is, at times, a type of ritual prayer for support and strength from the spirits of the ancestors. In his book, *The Power of Black Music*, Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., notes that Africans also used music in their “play, sport, work, and relaxation.” African music included songs of love, mockery, and celebration. It could announce war or inspire praise.

## Decentering

Enslaved Africans were robbed of every aspect of their lives that defined them as a people with distinct cultures and traditions. Think of some of the traditions practiced in your



Mkishi boys in Zimbabwe play traditional instruments during a Rites of Passage ceremony. Slaveholders in the colonies forbade this and many other aspects of African culture.





Phillis Wheatley was the first African in the American colonies to publish a book. Despite her dislocation, her work still hints of her kinship with Africa.

family that make your family life different from others. These traditions may be simple or they may be elaborate, but they help to define you and your family members. In colonial America, Africans were forbidden to be themselves, to practice the customs, traditions, and rites of passage that had **centered** their lives in Africa.

During this early period of American history, the loss of customs and traditions, language, and names created in Africans a dislike for things African, even a dislike for how Africans themselves looked. This was the beginning of a self-hatred, a **decentering** among Africans that had never occurred in Africa. On the continent, Africans did not make judgments about a person's skin color, hair, or other physical features. Africans did not use physical characteristics to say a person was inferior or superior. Nor did Africans consider themselves pagans, or nonreligious, because they did not practice Christianity. They certainly did not think they needed the kind of refinement that Phillis Wheatley refers to in her poem, "On Being Brought to America."

Phillis Wheatley was captured in what is today's Senegal, a nation on the west coast of Africa, and brought to America in 1761, when

she was barely eight years old. She was sold to John and Susanah Wheatley. By the age of 10, this young African child, renamed Phillis by the Wheatleys, could read and write in English. That her owners allowed Wheatley to learn to read and write, in the view of Europeans, could mean that she lived a good life as "a slave." On the other hand, Wheatley had lost her African culture and language and was thus dislocated and decentered.

In 1773, just three years before the Declaration of Independence, Phillis Wheatley's poems were published in London. As far as history tells, she was the first African in the American colonies to publish a book. Such good fortune was not the experience of most Africans who were enslaved.

It must have been very easy to separate Wheatley from her African background, for an eight-year-old child is not as aware of the customs and traditions of her people as an older person would be. Some of Wheatley's poems are very good examples of decentering. In these poems she wrote as if she were a white person. She says little of her native land, and wrote of Africa in terms she had heard from whites. The following poem written by Wheatley is a prime example of the results of decentering.

#### On Being Brought to America

"'Twas mery brought me from my Pagan land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:  
One redemption I neither sought nor knew.  
Some view our race with scornful eye.  
'Their color is a diabolic die.'  
Remember Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,  
May be refined and join th' angelic train."

—Phillis Wheatley

Perhaps, like many enslaved Africans, Wheatley's decentering or dislocation was not



## DID YOU KNOW ?

General George Washington wrote a letter of commendation to Phillis Wheatley for her poetry.

always complete. There is evidence in her letters that there were times when she fondly remembered her mother and her African birthplace, and even in her poetry she writes of a kinship to Africa, as the following lines suggest:

I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate  
Was snatch'd from Afric's fancy'd happy seat:  
What pangs must molest,  
What sorrows labour in my parent's breast?  
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery mov'd  
That from a father seiz'd his babe belov'd:  
Such, such my case. And can I then but pray  
Others may never feel tyrannic  
sway?

—Phillis Wheatley

Perhaps decentering was so effective—as seen in some of Wheatley's poetry—because in North America the colonists recognized only European Christians as their human equals and European values and traditions as worthy of honor. The colonists' hostility toward African culture created a negative **stereotype** and, therefore, a **bias** against Africa and Africans that continues to this day. For example, enslaved Africans weary with work and underfed, may have taken food without permission. These Africans would have been accused of stealing. A stereotype would develop that “all Africans teal.” This bias is evident today when security guards in department stores follow African American shoppers around, expecting them to

steal. This comes from a stereotype that began during the enslavement.

Fortunately, because all people do not react the same way to oppression, there were many Africans who remained centered. They were somehow able to hold on to some aspect of their self-esteem and keep a positive image of their African heritage. This was difficult, and it was even more difficult to instill African pride in the generations that followed the Africans' arrival starting in 1619. In each generation, however, there were always a few strong, independent men and women who stayed centered and believed in themselves. They were the ones who tried to center themselves by respecting their ancestors, keeping African traditions alive, and vowing to keep their dignity under impossible conditions. The majority of Africans who were



Like many African Americans, performing artist Erykah Badu, left, works to preserve her heritage. She is shown here wearing a traditional African headwrap, also shown on the African woman, right.



without cultural leaders—those who would teach the old values, play the rhythms of the drums, sing the old songs, speak the old language—became decentered and lost in America.

### THE VALUE OF BEING CENTERED

Africans suffered when they lost their sense of family and community, the support of the

extended family, and the bonds of the communal family. They lost the desire and inspiration to carry on the honorable traditions of those who came before. Family and community no longer existed as they had in Africa. The traditional African extended family had provided a strong sense of self and personal value to its members. It provided a sense of security, protection, shared wisdom, and shared wealth. The community

Early Attempts to Justify Enslavement				
QUOTE	COLONISTS' REASONING	COLONISTS' ASSUMPTION	OUTCOME	REFLECTION
<p>"The African is the most degraded of human races and whose form approaches that of the beast."</p> <p><b>George Curvier</b></p>	<p>Enslaved Africans are physically and culturally different from whites; therefore, they should not be treated the same as whites.</p>	<p>Enslaved Africans are not human.</p>	<p>Dehumanization</p>	<p>Physical characteristics and culture are only part of what makes us human. What are some other factors the European colonists neglected to take into account?</p>
<p>"Let us forget Africa never to return to it for Africa is no part of the historical globe."</p> <p><b>Georg Hegel</b></p>	<p>Africa never made any worthwhile contributions to world history.</p>	<p>Enslaved Africans do not belong to any distinct culture, civilization, or race worthy of our attention.</p>	<p>Based on their dark skin, enslaved Africans are renamed <i>Negroes</i>, a term which comes from the Spanish word <i>negro</i>, which means "black."</p>	<p>European scholars were certainly aware of early European and Arab accounts of the flourishing civilizations they encountered when they traveled to Africa. This information conflicted so much with whites' perception of Africa and Africans, however, that the scholars found it easier to ignore it. Had this information been more accepted, how might it have changed history?</p>
<p>"I am apt to suspect that the Negroes in general are naturally inferior to the whites. There has never been a civilized nation of any other complexion than white."</p> <p><b>David Hume</b></p>	<p>Negroes are not white; therefore, they must be uncivilized.</p>	<p>Enslavement is a natural condition for Africans.</p>	<p>Enslavement is legalized.</p>	<p>Enslavement is linked to race and color. Africans are viewed as "naturally inferior" to whites, and enslavement is deemed to be in the best interest of African people. If enslavement was such a good thing for Africans, why did so many Africans protest and rebel against it for more than 250 years?</p>
<p>"They break, waste, and destroy everything they handle."</p> <p><b>Dr. Samuel Cartwright</b></p>	<p>Africans are not clever enough to have hidden reasons for destroying enslavers' property.</p>	<p>Africans cannot be trusted with important tasks.</p>	<p>Africans are restricted to physical labor and are prevented from doing jobs that demonstrate their intellect.</p>	<p>Many African Americans in positions of authority are quite familiar with the experience of having their judgment second-guessed by whites who still believe this myth. Why do you think this myth still persists today?</p>



surrounded the individual with a sense of belonging. It provided the person with reasons to live a productive, fruitful life. With family and community in place, one felt centered.

African Americans who are centered in African values are more likely to have a positive sense of self and therefore be better able to cope with racial stereotypes that were used to justify enslavement and still exist today. They will feel grounded and have a sense of awareness and belonging. They will be inspired to achieve as those who came before them achieved. In this way, being centered in one's culture is important to all people.

In early American history, centeredness was often expressed in names such as the Free African Society. This was a mutual aid society that provided for needs such as burial insurance and free education for its members. Members shared wisdom on how to survive in a hostile environment. When these organizations and institutions were centered, they were able to reclaim and express some of the values of traditional Africa. In the case of the Free African Society, the value of community and cooperation was emphasized.

## Preserving Cultural Memories

A culture is resilient if it can exist in the smallest of spaces, survive the weight of oppression, and thrive, sometimes right in the face of the oppressors. African culture was resilient because the people themselves were resilient. Time after time they bounced back from the harshest of circumstances. Their resilient response to enslavement was the only thing that protected them from total psychological and, perhaps, complete physical

## DID YOU KNOW?



The form of New York City's public schools was based on the Free African Society's educational system.

destruction. Since it was not until after the Civil War that the masses of African Americans became Christian, it took the individual leadership of men and women who rose up in the colonies and on the plantations to put in place the moral and spiritual practices that saved the community. The treatment of one another, understanding what is right, what is wrong, and what are appropriate codes of behavior, and much more in terms of good conduct are practices usually learned in the family, in the community, and through religion. Decentered and dislocated, enslaved Africans lost the connectedness to family and community that provided much of this but, once again, African resilience saved the community.

## MAINTAINING ORAL TRADITIONS

Old women who remembered just a word or a phrase from their parents or grandparents often used that word or phrase as the basis for teaching. These elders of the community were teaching good values and a spirit of community that were similar to traditions in Africa. Many of these elders were like **griots** (GREE-oh) or **arokens** (ah-ROW-kins), the storytellers and oral historians in West African cultures responsible for remembering the past.

These elders among the enslaved Africans in America used their gift of words and their knowledge of the past to teach the people how to survive morally and spiritually. They used their

## THE SPOKEN WORD

A griot or aroken was usually a member of a family which for centuries was assigned this role. Keeping track of a family's history—usually that of the royal family—was an awesome task, and it was even more difficult when they had to recall the entire

history of the village or kingdom. Oral storytelling is a strong tradition of African people. Whenever the people needed to hear about their history during ceremonies and holidays they called on the griot to remember and recite the experiences of the past.



imaginations to weave morality tales and proverbs. These were word-magicians who spread joy, beauty, wonder, hope, courage, inspiration, excitement, and a sense of worth. They were preachers, teachers, storytellers, and sometimes all three at once. They were significant in maintaining community and in keeping the memory of African values alive.

### CONTINUING THE SKILL OF THE ARTISANS

Men and women who worked with wood, stone, straw, clay, metals, and cloth on the plantations also retained memories of their African past. These artisans would become the scientists and interpreters of the natural environment, often integrating African designs and symbols in their craft as smiths working with gold, silver, tin, and wrought iron. Stonemasons, carvers, carpenters, potters, seamstresses, and basket weavers used African styles and images to create their wares. Others who had knowledge of the medical value of plants and herbs were looked upon as “root doctors.” These traditions continued the African cultural influence even under oppression (see Journey, pp. B1, B2, and B6).

Occasionally there were other responses to enslavement that seemed to recall cultural behaviors and activities from the distant past. It was easy to see the strength and courage of early African soldiers on the continent in the wrestling and boxing matches among the enslaved on the plantations. The fiery spirit of African resisters was reminiscent of the proud fighting spirit of great West African conquerors such as Sundiata, Mansa Musa, Sunni Ali Ber, and Askia Muhammad.

Other cultural patterns from their past could be seen in the way Africans cleared the land for farming. The skill with which these early

enslaved Africans cleared and prepared the land echoed the harmony with nature that had been treasured by their African ancestors. Runaway Africans heading north to freedom studied the skies with the same keen interest that the Dogon (DOE-gon) people of West Africa had studied the stars. Perhaps it was these cultural memories that held enslaved Africans together when their community, ethnic, and familial bonds were stripped away.

### Survival Skills

Four centuries of enslavement led many people to believe, mistakenly, that enslaved Africans were **homogeneous**, a single group with the same ethnic background and reactions to their enslavement. Enslaved people shared many of the emotions that came with being separated from their particular ethnic communities in Africa. Forced to live together, enslaved Africans from many different ethnic and language groups gradually developed a common language to express themselves. This language was part of their survival skills. It would be instrumental in the formation of a new lifestyle and the creation of African American culture.

On the plantations, some Africans were so terrified of the slaveholders that they soon accepted their enslavement and informed on other Africans who resisted. They informed to survive. The vast majority of Africans, however, found other ways, which amounted to genius, to survive enslavement. They told the slaveholders what they knew the slaveholders wanted to hear. Later, they would laugh with each other about how they had fooled their captors. This was a learned survival response that developed after many Africans had been killed for daring to speak out or for resisting their enslavement. Frederick Douglass, a former enslaved African, once warned enslaved Africans to speak to whites with the fronts of their heads. He believed that a person’s emotions and higher-level thinking began in the back of the head before moving forward to the front of the head, where they were then voiced as words

#### DID YOU KNOW ?

Enslaved Africans decorated their graves with objects such as seashells, flowers, glass beads, and handmade charms in arrangements very similar to the way it was done in Africa.



through the mouth. He believed that if the enslaved spoke from the front of their heads, they would be able to hide their real emotions and thoughts from the slaveholders. Enslaved Africans saw daily examples of the danger of speaking up for themselves. They concluded that their slaveholders did not want honesty. The slaveholders did not want to hear the truth.

The great poet Paul Laurence Dunbar was moved to say in one of his poems:

We wear the mask  
That grins and lies  
It hides our cheeks and  
shades our eyes.  
This debt we pay  
to human guile  
With torn and bleeding hearts,  
we smile,  
and mouths with myriad subtleties.

Africans learned many other necessary skills for survival among hostile whites. They had to appear obedient, humble, and ignorant. If an African refused to show obedience and ignorance, he or she might be killed. In 17th-century America, enslavement and racism created three distinct groups: Native Americans who owned the land, Europeans who captured the land, and Africans who were forced to work the land. It seemed essential to the Europeans to believe in their superiority over all others.

Enslaved Africans displayed a sense of nobility and high purpose in the way they approached their lives under oppression. They took their culture inward when they were prevented from expressing any outward signs of African values and styles. Enslaved Africans triumphed, even as their names were torn from them and replaced by new ones, because they knew the essence of their ancestors could not be stamped out completely by the cruelty of their oppressors. When enslavement ripped apart ethnic bonds by forcefully separating ethnically similar Africans, dislocated Africans forged new bonds with each other to minimize the harsh conditions of their enslavement.



Part African American, part Native American, sculptor Edmonia Lewis, seen here with one of her works, enriched African American culture in the 19th century.

## African Americans Form a New Culture

Many African Americans are unable to trace their origin to one specific African ethnic group. The mixture of various ethnic groups—Africans, African Americans, Native Americans, and Europeans—created a new African ethnic group, **African Americans**. The group is African because both its culture and history are rooted in the experiences of people of the African continent, regardless of the physical characteristics of the group. In contemporary America, a growing number of African Americans have Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and other cultural backgrounds. Given this diversity, skin color and other physical characteristics are often unreliable methods for identifying and classifying African Americans. As we enter the 21st century, culture, not color, may be the determining factor in assigning ethnicity.





## Chapter 8 After You Read

Read each section carefully, then write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

### Comprehension Review

1. What negative beliefs does the term *slave* imply about Africans?
2. Describe the dislocation that Africans endured in colonial America.
3. Explain the origin of Ebonics, or Black English.
4. Describe the use of drums in traditional African culture.
5. How did the dislocation of Africans lead to a decentering among some enslaved Africans?
6. What benefits are derived from being centered in one's culture?
7. What did elders among the enslaved Africans do to preserve memories of the African culture?
8. Describe three survival skills enslaved Africans developed in order to endure the cruelty of their oppressors.
9. The author states that African Americans are a new ethnic group composed of many different cultural backgrounds. Explain why the words *African* and *American* are linked to name this diverse group of individuals.

### Center Your Thinking

10. As you read in Chapter 7, between 1750 and 1788, mutinies often occurred on slave ships during the Middle Passage. What negative stereotype could have developed from these occurrences? What positive trait of the enslaved Africans did the events actually demonstrate?

### Vocabulary and Concept Development

1. The author states that **names** can carry additional meanings. What additional meaning does the term **colonial America** imply that the term *America* does not? What common meaning is associated with the terms colonial America and **enslaved Africans**?
2. Explain the relationship used to form the following analogy: **Decentering** is to *self-hatred* as **centered** is to *self-respect*. What is the relationship between a negative **stereotype** and **bias**?
3. How are **rites of passage** today similar to those in traditional African cultures? What is the relationship between a negative **stereotype** and **bias**?
4. Is it correct to describe African Americans as **homogeneous**? Explain your answer.

### Reading a Timeline

Use Unit 3 and Chapter 8 timelines to complete the following:

1. Each of these nations: Portugal, Spain, Holland, and England entered the European Slave Trade process between 1441 and 1808 by way of a specific event. List one event list for each nation in chronological order.
2. In chronological order, calculate the number of years between the date the Portuguese captured an African from West Africa and the date when
  - a. the European Slave Trade officially began.
  - b. Pedro Cabral opened Brazil to Europe.
  - c. an African was enslaved to Santo Domingo.
3. How long did the European Slave Trade exist before it was outlawed?