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ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

RESEARCH GUIDE

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# African American Genealogy



Family Tree by Kadir Nelson

**A Selected Bibliography of Sources  
in the Auburn Avenue Research Library**

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## INTRODUCTION

Many of us are familiar with the word GENEALOGY and its meaning—the study of family history. Conversely, not many of us are clear about all that is involved with genealogical research. Most of us did not become aware that we had a past worth exploring, until Alex Haley crashed the gates of the North American genealogical tradition with his epic piece ROOTS!

On the other hand, for many of us who are involved with the preservation and reinterpretation of our past, we know genealogy as a science. As a science, GENEALOGY involves not only tracing one's familial past, for the joy of it, but, ensuring that the continuity of that lineage in the present for future generations. In some instances this approach to genealogy assumes a more legal emphasis. For example, one can just imagine how quickly one's family tree will grow, if an unknown wealthy relative were to bequeath his estate to you. One would be faced with a serious challenge proving one's lineage to that relative! So, genealogical research as a science does not only affect how we perceive our past, but as the example implies, it can have serious repercussions in our contemporary lives.

Additionally, genealogical research is considered a science primarily because of the methodological approach utilized to achieve the desired goals of the inquirer. Firstly, evidence, (be it primary or secondary) has to be proven true by the inquirer. In instances when the evidence is supported by facts, the end result is sanctioned and a complex puzzle of human experience is celebrated as a whole again.

In terms of its scientific approach to family history, one must question whether, one method of inquiry is applicable, to all families in a multi-ethnic society? Well, of course, the answer is no, especially in the case of groups who have experienced forced or voluntary migration. It has been determined that a more nuanced approach to their study has to be adopted. African American genealogical research carries with it the weight of proving our citizenship and tracing our lineage in the most unique of historical experiences—the system of slavery and all that it entailed. Today, the task of genealogical research seems at times to be as daunting and insurmountable as the experiences of our ancestors themselves. This reality is compounded the manner of how records were kept (in other words, with little or no government or legal documentation).

Mr. John F. Baker in his *The Washingtons of Wessynton Plantation*, helps us to navigate the complexities of finding one's "Roots" as an African American in contemporary North America. His monograph impresses upon us that the reality of that past is very instrumental to our survival and continuity in our world today. By utilizing the genealogical approach specific to the African American experience we have benefited from his journey, one which has been as courageous as it has been enlightening. *The Washingtons of Wessynton Plantation* also teaches us not only that we all have a story to tell, but that we all should embark on a journey of self-discovery!

~ Abayomi Manrique  
Library Associate,  
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## **AUDIO-VISUAL**

Burns, Robert A. Out of Your Tree! Crazy About Genealogy. Austin, TX: Rondo Films, 1993. 38 min. **Call Number: VHS 929.1 BURNS**

Gates, Henry Louis, et al. African American Lives. Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2006. ca. 240 min. **Call Number: DVD 973.0496 AFRICAN**

Willard, Jim, et al. Ancestors: How to Research Your Family History. Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 1997. ca. 60 min.  
**Call Number: VHS 929.1 ANCESTORS PT.2**

## **BOOKS**

Barksdale-Hall, Roland. The African – American Family's Guide to Tracing Our Roots: Healing, Understanding, & Restoring Our Families. Phoenix, AZ: Amber Books, 2005. **Call Number: 929.1 BARKSDALE-HALL**

Beasley, Donna. Family Pride: The Complete Guide to Tracing African-American Genealogy. New York: Macmillan USA, 1997.  
**Call Number: 929.1 BEASLEY**

Blockson, Charles L. and Ron Fry. Black Genealogy. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977. **Call Number: 929.1 BLOCKSON**

Burroughs, Tony. Black Roots: A Beginners Guide to Tracing The African American Family Tree. New York: Fireside Book, 2001.  
**Call Number: 929.1 BURROUGHS**

Cofer, Loris D. Black Genealogy. Glennville, GA: Glennville Printing & Office Supply, 1991. **Call Number: 929.3 COFER**

Crowe, Elizabeth Powell. Genealogy Online: Researching Your Roots. 2nd ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 1996. **Call Number: 929.1 CROWE**

Fears, Mary L. Jackson. Slave Ancestral Research: It's Something Else. Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1995. **Call Number: 929.2 MCCREERY FAMILY**

Franklin, Donna L. Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African American Family. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.  
**Call Number: 306.85 FRANKLIN**

Gates, Henry Louis. Finding Oprah's Roots: Finding Your Own. New York: Crown Publishers, 2007. **Call Number: 929.1072 GATES**

- Howell, Barbara Thompson. How to Trace Your African-American Roots. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1999. **Call Number: 929.1 HOWELL**
- Hyman, Rick and Ronda. My Texas Family: An Uncommon Journey to Prosperity, Featuring Photographs from 1912 to 1927. Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2000. **Call Number: 929.2 HYMAN FAMILY**
- Johnson, Anne E. et al. A Student's Guide to African American Genealogy. Phoenix, AZ.: Oryx Press, 1996. **Call Number: 929.1 JOHNSON**
- Merritt, Carole. The Herndons: An Atlanta Family. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2002. **Call Number: 929.2 HERNDON**
- Saunt, Claudio. Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. **Call Number: 929.2 GRAYSON**
- Smith, Franklin C. and Emily Anne Croom. A Genealogist's Guide to Discovering Your African American Ancestors. Cincinnati, OH: Betterway Books, 2003. **Call Number: 929.1 SMITH**
- Streets, David H. Slave Genealogy: A Research Guide with Case Studies. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2004. **Call Number: 929.1 STREETS**
- Walker, James D. et al. Black Genealogy: How to Begin. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Center for Continuing Education, 1977. **Call Number: 929.1 WALKER**
- Walton-Raji, Angela Y. Black Indian Genealogy Research. Westminster, MD: Heritage Books, 2007. **Call Number: 929.308996 WALTON-RAJI**
- Witcher, Curt Bryan. African American Genealogy: A Bibliography and Guide to Sources. Fort Wayne, IN: Round Tower Books, 2000. **Call Number: 929.1 WITCHER**
- Wolfman, Ira. Do People Grow on Family Trees? Genealogy for Kids & Other Beginners. New York: Workman Publishing, 1991. **Call Number: 929.1 WOLFMAN**
- Woodtor, Dee. Finding a Place Called Home: A Guide to African-American Genealogy and Historical Identity. New York: Random House, 1999. **Call Number: 929.1 WOODSTOR**

## **GENEALOGICAL DATABASES**

Genealogical databases for Census records and related materials can be located alphabetically on the Atlanta Fulton-Public Library System website (**www.afpls.org**):

Select **A-Z Databases**

At A, select **AncestryLibraryEdition**  
(access in an AFPLS Library; no remote access)

Select an option / tab

Type the name inquiry.

See also: *Ancestry Library Edition Quick User Guide* (ProQuest, [2009]) at the Reference Desk. A related website, **www.ancestry.com**, has an **African American Family History** FEATURED COLLECTION with article guides, such as “The Six Phases of African American Genealogy” by Tony Burroughs.

At H, select **HeritageQuest Online Census**  
(access also remotely with Library Card and the current GALILEO password);

Select an option / tab

Type the name inquiry.

See also: *Search Guide: HeritageQuest Online* (ProQuest, 2007) at **more description** or at the Reference Desk.

For Newspaper Obituaries, on the **afpls.org** website, **A-Z Databases** list:

At A, Select **America’s Obituaries and Death Notices (Newsbank)**  
(access also remotely with Library Card)

Type the name inquiry.

See also the online **Tutorial** at **more description**.

## **WEB SITES**

Census.gov. 27 August 2008. The U.S. Census Bureau. 17 February 2009.  
<<http://www.census.gov/genealogy/www/>>.

NARA. 2009. The National Archives and Records Administration. 17 February 2009.  
<<http://www.archives.gov>>.

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