
Who are African Americans?

African Americans make up 12.3% of the United States population and 1.4% of the Canadian population. African Americans are descendants from the regions of Africa, the Caribbean, and other areas of the world. Not all blacks in North America are African Americans. Some blacks have immigrated from the Caribbean, for instance. African Americans value their families, social status, and education. They desire to live with the respect of those they encounter.



Population of African Americans in North America:

37,131,771

Canada 11,880

Languages spoken by African Americans:

English

Top locations with highest population of African Americans in North America:

Predominately in the Southern and Northern United States

What is their heritage?



African Americans are mostly of African descent. Around 12 million Africans were brought to the United States in the 16th to 19th centuries. In 1860, there were approximately 4 million Africans that were considered to be slaves in the United States. After emancipation following the Civil War, segregation became the norm until the 1950s. Many of the African Americans living in Canada fled the “Jim Crow” laws restricting African American life. Through the Civil Rights Movement, equality between all races was finally enforced by the government. The election of Barack Obama as the first U.S. president who is African American is widely viewed as a result of the cultural shift, even though racial prejudice against blacks still exists among many bigoted Americans.

African Americans can be noted for many achievements. Martin Luther King, Jr., led the way for Civil Rights for which he received a Nobel Peace Prize. Thurgood Marshall served on the Supreme Court from 1967 to 1991. Robert Johnson became a billionaire as president of Black Entertainment Television (BET) in 2001. Oprah Winfrey continues to be one of the most influential Americans. Others have been recognized for winning significant awards in physics, science, chemistry, music, sports, poetry, literature, and many other fields.

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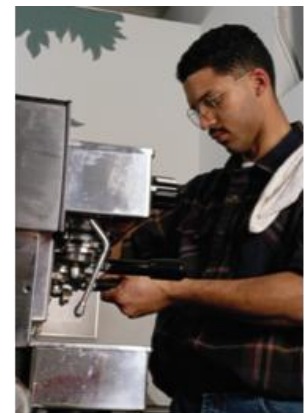
What are their beliefs?

Beliefs of African Americans range from Christianity, Islam, Nation of Islam, and many other religions, but their dominant religion is the Protestant forms that are celebrated in African American churches. Several mega-churches exist in the U.S. that are predominantly African American.

The first African American congregations and churches were formed before 1800 by free and slave African Americans. After slavery was abolished, African Americans continued to establish separate congregations and churches. Segregationists had their influence, but the blacks in the South shaped their own religious culture. The tradition of African-Americans worshiping together continued to develop during the late 19th century and continues to this day. Talented Baptist and Methodist leaders emerged who led black churches into both religious and social eras of freedom. Generational changes are underway today as younger blacks are often distracted by other activities and declining church attendance is one example of a spiritual change.

How can we pray?

- Pray that God will draw all African Americans to Himself.
- Pray that God will raise up individuals who have a heart for African Americans so that they may be reached with the gospel.
- Pray that believers in black churches will actively witness, live in biblical obedience, and actively make disciples.



What can my church do?

Endvisioning—beginning with the end in mind

- Map out the area where African Americans are living in the community so they can be located and reached.
- Learn their ways as a culture and their worldview in order to better understand them so the gospel can be presented in the most effective way.
- Adopt African Americans in your community with a long-term commitment to see that a strategy is in place, evangelism is authentic, disciples are made, churches are planted, leaders are trained, and multiplication of believers and churches goes to at least the fourth generation to penetrate lostness.
- Build relationships with African Americans so that they will eventually see Christ in you, and so that you will be able to share the love of Christ with them.
- Discover the needs of African Americans and help them meet their needs through the love of Christ and as an in-road to sharing Christ with them.



Prayer—focusing on the people as well as calling out workers to the harvest

- Fast and pray regularly for African Americans, confessing any harbored prejudice or hateful actions, and asking for the Holy Spirit to replace them with love and a godly burden for the salvation of all people, beginning with African Americans.
- Create African American prayer advocacy media (fliers, bookmarks, calendars, etc.) that can help promote more people-reaching and praying for African Americans in your church.
- Become a part of a prayer group that already exists that prays for African Americans.
- Prayerwalk in the communities where African Americans live.

Networking for Evangelism—identifying relationships

- Get involved in activities that would put a believer in direct contact with African Americans so that intentional relationships can be built upon which the gospel can be communicated and lived out.
- Meet needs by assisting in tutoring, healthcare, job skills training, employment opportunities, government leadership roles, and community organizing in order to have a strong voice to communicate the gospel message.
- Discover other believers that are working to make disciples among African Americans, teaming up with them in order to work alongside of them.
- Mobilize African American churches to reach out to the communities where African Americans live by doing things such as hosting a block party, cookout, car wash, and so forth.

Starting Small Groups—that can become churches

- Start a small group Bible study where African Americans can learn about Christ.
- Disciple African American believers to make disciples of their family, friends, and other relationships.

Leadership Training—identifying and equipping

- Identify and equip leaders in newly-planted African American churches to become strong witnesses, modeling for others a life that is fully surrendered to Jesus Christ.
- Train pastors to disciple church members to live for Christ and make disciples of others.
- Train pastors and church members on how to more effectively share a contextualized gospel message with African Americans.

Scripture

- Distribute Bibles to the local community where African Americans live.
- Use Bible storying, printed Bibles, and the Bible on audio to convey God's Word to African Americans.



www.peoplegroups.info

If you cannot locate this people group in your community, find them online at www.peoplegroups.info, a site sponsored by the North American Mission Board, SBC.

What is keeping the gospel from them?

Church attendance can become a barrier if the gospel, as with any group of Christians, becomes a ritualized social past-time. Like other professing believers, African Americans can attend church for fellowship, but miss having a relationship with Jesus Christ. There are some individuals who simply have not heard the gospel message or surrendered their whole lives to Christ. Believers among African Americans need to be discipled in biblically faithful churches beyond exciting worship experiences. Muslims and other non-Christian religions present barriers to understanding the gospel by being caught up in traditions and rituals. Believers must faithfully care to build relationships so that African Americans can become disciples of Jesus Christ.

What are their needs?

African Americans have found the constitutional freedom of religion liberating, resulting in a strong spirituality, yet individuals in each generation need to embrace Jesus Christ in order to be saved. There are other blacks who have come here from overseas, blended with African Americans, and who have never before heard of the good news of Jesus Christ. Some have rejected Jesus claiming Him to be part of other races' religion and not their own culture. African Americans need to be prayed for on a daily basis, they need to hear the love of Christ, and they need individuals who have a heart for them to invest in their lives. Beyond spiritual needs, African Americans have different economic and social status needs within their culture. According to the Poverty Center at the University of Michigan, the largest percentage of the poor any single people group in America is black. Gang violence, high rates of teen pregnancies, and crime are some social issues that plague African American communities. Many African Americans feel they have been disproportionately sidelined in job opportunities and involvement in political reforms. The historical lack of quality education has not benefitted by enforced busing laws. African Americans want better education where teachers can invest in students' lives so that they too might have a better life for themselves when they get older.



Information may be updated by writing peoplegroups@namb.net.

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