

# Getting Started in African American Family History Research

## *Class 4: The 10 Million Names Project: How to Get Involved*

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### **Project Mission and Goals**

The 10 Million Names Project seeks to recover the names and restore information to families of the estimated 10 million men, women, and children of African descent who were enslaved in America before 1865 through a collaborative network of expert genealogists, cultural organizations, and community-based family historians.

Our project goals include:

- Establish a document-based research repository
- Amplify the voices of people who have been telling their family stories for centuries
- Connect people and resources

### **Flagship Projects**

10 Million Names is organized into five thematic flagship projects:

1. **Making America: Records of Enslaved Laborers Within and Beyond the Plantation**  
Millions of enslaved people lived on plantations, private homes, and universities before emancipation. Enslavers often created financial and personal records to track, count, and inventory families and individuals laboring on their land.
2. **On the Battlefield: Records of Soldiers, Veterans, and Refugees**  
Prior to emancipation, Black soldiers served both voluntarily and involuntarily in conflicts in what is now the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. Enslaved and free men took part in colonial wars (1609–1775), the Revolutionary War (1775–1783), the War of 1812 (1812–1815), and the Civil War (1861–1865). This project will rely not just on the rich records created for soldiers, but also for veterans and wartime refugees.
3. **Journeys to Liberation: Records of Mariners, Migrants, and Freedom Seekers**  
All throughout the slavery era in pre- and post-colonial America, individuals and families of African descent pursued paths to freedom. Most famously, people used the Underground Railroad to escape, but other enslaved people turned to legal channels to gain emancipation.
4. **Community Building: Records of Black Institutions**  
While historically Black institutions, organizations, and churches have played a pivotal role in the lives of men, women, and children of African descent after emancipation, some of these organizations were also central to enslaved people in pre- and post-colonial America.



## 5. Remembering Slavery: Testimonials After Emancipation

The most powerful, poignant, and detailed records of formerly enslaved persons are first-person accounts collected in the pre- and post-emancipation eras. The oral tradition of persons of African descent and enslaved persons helped Black family history and culture survive.

### Research Process

- Goal 1: Locate the names of 10 Million men, women, and children of African descent who were enslaved on American soil.
- Goal 2: Trace the descendants of these enslaved individuals to the present.
- Goal 3: Create family trees—when possible.

### Resources

All products from the 10 Million Names Project will be free and accessible to the public. They include:

- Educational resources to assist people with their family history research:  
<https://10millionnames.org/research-help>
- Searchable databases, which will be added on a rolling basis:  
<https://www.americanancestors.org/browse-database?databasename=10millionnames>

Sign up for database news at this link: <https://dbnews.americanancestors.org/>

### Getting Involved

#### Collaborators

10 Million Names can only succeed in its mission through close collaboration with organizations dedicated to African American genealogy, culture, and history. See a complete list of our current collaborators here:

<https://10millionnames.org/collaborators>

#### Submissions from the Public

We also encourage independent researchers and members of the public to contribute to the project. Some examples of items we are interested in viewing:

- Bible records
- Family papers
- Genealogical notes
- Family trees (as a GEDCOM file)
- Oral histories
- Family reunion packets

You can submit at this link here: <https://nehgsweb.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portal/5>

#### Volunteer Projects

We also have several volunteer projects available for people to work on. We welcome people of all levels of genealogical research experience. Please email us at [10mn@nehgs.org](mailto:10mn@nehgs.org) if you are interested!