


Long before Christopher Columbus stepped foot on what would come to be known as the Americas, the expansive territory was inhabited by Native Americans. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, as more explorers sought to colonize their land, Native Americans responded in various stages, from cooperation to indignation to revolt. Below are events that shaped Native Americans’ tumultuous history following the arrival of foreign settlers. 1492: Christopher Columbus lands on a Caribbean Island after three months of traveling. He explores the South under the guidance of Native Americans who had been captured along the way. October 1540: De Soto and the Spaniards plan to rendezvous with ships in Alabama when they are attacked by Native Americans. African Americans, one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States. African Americans are mainly of African ancestry, but many have non-Black ancestors as well. Learn more about African Americans, including their history, culture, and contributions. African Americans, one of the largest of the many ethnic groups in the United States. African Americans are mainly of African ancestry, but many have non-Black ancestors as well. African Americans are largely the descendants of enslaved people who were brought from their African homelands by force to work in the New World. Their rights were severely limited, and they were long denied a rightful share in the economic, social, and political progress of the United States. Jesse J. Holland, The Invisibles: The Untold Story of African American Slaves in the White House (Lyons Press, imprint of Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). Paul Jennings, A Colored Man’s Reminiscences of James Madison (Brooklyn, N.Y.: G.C. Beadle, 1865). This article was originally published February 24, 2016. Share. Find us on Share on Facebook. Share on Twitter. The West/African Americans/The Long Nineteenth Century Jesse Gant UW-Madison, Department of History 2011. Anderson, Gary Clayton, and Kathleen Chamberlain. Power and Promise: The Changing American West. New York: Pearson Longman, 2008. Andrews, Dee E. The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800: The Shaping of an Evangelical Culture. Generations of Captivity: A History of African-American Slaves. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003. Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998. Berry, Stephen William. The nineteenth century was a time of radical transformation in the political and legal status of African Americans. Blahs were freed from slavery and began to enjoy greater rights as citizens (though full recognition of their rights remained a long way off). Despite these dramatic developments, many economic and demographic characteristics of African Americans at the end of the nineteenth century were not that different from what they had been in the mid-1800s. Tables 1 and 2 present characteristics of black and white Americans in 1900, as recorded in the Census for that year. (The 1900 Census did not record information on years of schooling or on income, so these important variables are left out of these tables, though they will be examined below.)