



Project Summary



“In every conceivable manner, the family is a link to our past, bridge to our future.”—Alex Haley

Between the 1500s and 1865, ten million women, men, and children were enslaved in America. There are at least 40 million descendants living in America today, but slavery separated families, erased names, and obscured facts.

As a result, millions of Americans encounter a “brick wall” when attempting to trace their ancestors before 1870, the date of the first census to record previously enslaved people.

The 10 Million Names Project

As genealogists, we believe everyone should have access to information that allows them to discover their family history and pass it down to future generations.

Through genealogical research, the 10 Million Names project proposes to recover the names of the ten million people of African descent enslaved in America and restore those names to their families and to history.

We aim to amplify the voices of people who have been telling their family stories for centuries, connect people seeking answers to family history questions with researchers and data partners, and expand access to data, resources, and information about enslaved African Americans.

Why It Matters

People want to know where they came from. Knowing how one’s personal family story connects to history is powerful. Knowing the names, origins, and life stories of one’s ancestors can be life changing.

Our Methodology

Our method is to eliminate the 1870 “brick wall” by knocking it down from the rear: it’s much easier to trace enslaved people forward to living descendants than to complete the same task in reverse.

We have assembled a team of expert genealogists and leading scholars of African American history and studies. We will source data from archives, libraries, and organizations around the world. We will also seek input from communities of family historians around the country. Each project will yield discoveries that will inform our approach, build tools, and engage partners to support our overall objective.

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We are beginning with five pilot projects; we will consolidate our gains, scaling our capacity and reach over time. Our genealogists will begin with overarching pilot projects which will serve as an organizing guide to our research.

Within just a few years, the genealogical databases of the 10 Million Names Project will coalesce to form a research asset of virtually unparalleled national importance. This national treasure will support academic and non-profit research for generations to come, in a variety of academic fields, including the following:



- Population Movement
- Social History
- Regional History
- Culture Studies
- Religion Studies
- Longevity & Health
- Economics & Wealth
- Educational Advancement

Social Impact

The 10 Million Names Project will:

- Recover the family stories of more than 40 million Americans living today
- Create a permanent, free, publicly available repository of gold-standard African American family histories
- Document the location, forced migration, and post-Emancipation diaspora of America's enslaved men, women, and children from the 1500s to 1865
- Educate millions of Americans about the tools and techniques of researching African American genealogy
- Engage and develop the next generation of genealogists in America

CENSUS OF FREE AND SLAVE COLORED.						
Census of	Free Colored.	Increase Per Cent.	Slaves.	Increase Per Cent.	Free Colored and Slaves.	Increase Per Cent.
1790	59,466		697,807		757,363	
1800	108,395	82.28	893,041	27.97	1,001,436	32.23
1810	186,446	72.00	1,191,364	33.40	1,377,810	37.58
1820	233,524	25.23	1,538,038	28.79	1,771,562	28.58
1830	319,599	36.87	2,009,043	30.61	2,328,642	31.44
1840	386,303	20.87	2,487,455	23.81	2,873,762	26.62
1850	434,449	12.46	3,204,313	28.82	3,638,762	26.62
1860	482,122	10.97	3,953,587	23.38	4,435,709	21.90
1870	4,886,387	.....	.....	.....	4,880,004	10.00
1880	.....	.....	.....	.....	6,580,763	34.80

