

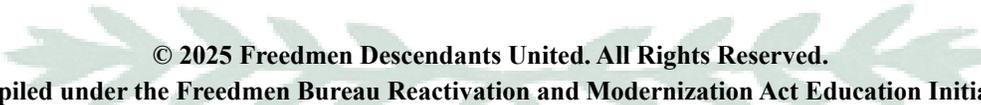
THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU REACTIVATION AND MODERNIZATION ACT OF 2025



The Freedmen Scrolls I–XX

**A Visual Journey Through the History, Loss, and Restoration of the Freedmen
Descendants**

**Curated and Compiled by Freedmen Descendants United
Produced for The Freedmen Act Education Hub
Website: www.thefreedmenact.org**



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Compiled under the Freedmen Bureau Reactivation and Modernization Act Education Initiative.**

Scroll I:

Before 1619

Presence, Exchanges & Record Loss

Time immemorial – Indigenous nations' own histories; archaeology shows deep-time peopling well before 1492.

1200–400 BCE – Olmec monumental art (Indigenous works showing varied features; diversity, and African arrival is possible).

≥10,000 BP – Bottle gourd reaches the Americas (likely ocean drift), showing species crossing oceans pre-1492.

c. 1000–1200 CE – Sweet potato in Polynesia (evidence of trans-Pacific exchange before Europeans).

AD 1021 – Norse at L'Anse aux Meadows (confirmed pre-Columbian Atlantic contact).

1500s – Africans, free and enslaved, present in Spanish America; Afro-Indigenous families appear in colonial records (before Virginia 1619).

1500s–1600s – Colonization brings burning/pillage of Indigenous codices, libraries, and sacred objects—major loss of the historical record.

Community oral histories preserve accounts of Afro-Atlantic contact before 1492. Formal evidence is still being studied. The FBRMA directs sustained research and public reporting (with FCRBPO and archives partners) on pre-colonial exchanges and on documenting/repatriating destroyed or dispersed heritage.

Label each line Consensus vs. Oral history/emerging and discuss what kinds of evidence (radiocarbon, genetics, artifacts, chronicles, oral tradition) support each.

Scroll II

1619–1776

The Colonial Roots of Slavery

1619: 20 Africans brought to Virginia and sold as lifetime enslaved labor

European powers expand trans-Atlantic trade in sugar and enslaved Africans

1660s–1700s: Colonial rebellions suppressed; racial caste system created

1680s: Slave codes restrict movement, property, and assembly of enslaved people

1705: Virginia laws make slavery hereditary; African children are born enslaved

1760s: Landed elites resist challenges to slavery and landownership

1770: Crispus Attucks (African & Indigenous ancestry) killed in Boston Massacre

Scroll III

Names of Freedmen

Origins and Dates of Names Applied to Freedmen

- **Slave** – from Medieval Latin *sclavus* via Old French; in English colonial law and U.S. statutes ca. 1600s–1865.
- **Negro** – from Spanish/Portuguese *negro* (Latin *niger*); used in English/U.S. law and records ca. 1600s–1970s.
- **Black** – English color term; appears in U.S. records from the 18th–19th centuries; widely standard from late 20th century onward.
 - **Moor** – from Latin *Maurus*; European exonym applied broadly to North/West Africans; common in Atlantic/colonial usage ca. 1500s–1700s.
 - **Free Negro / Free Person of Color** – record classes for manumitted or free-born persons ca. 1700s–1865; many folded into “Freedmen” after 1865–1866.
- **Freedman/Freedmen** – legal status meaning formerly enslaved; formalized in U.S. usage 1865–1870 (Freedmen’s Bureau Act 1865; 1866 treaties); used in federal/tribal records thereafter.
- **Tribal Freedmen** – Freedmen within Native nations; status recognized in the 1866 treaties (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Seminole); recognition disputes continue into the present.
- **Racial slur (hard R)** – attested as a pejorative in English by the late 1700s; widely used in the U.S. through the 1800s–1900s, including against Freedmen during Reconstruction and Jim Crow.
- **African American** – phrase with earlier uses; nationally popularized in 1988 as a broad umbrella that also includes immigrants.
- **ADOS (American Descendants of Slavery)** – modern lineage term (ca. 2016); not a legal category.
 - **FBA (Foundational Black American)** – modern cultural/lineage framing (ca. 2019); not a legal category.
 - **Turtle Islander** – land-based identity rooted in ancient Indigenous origin traditions; the English term “Turtle Island” gained wide public use from the 1970s onward.
- **Xi** – proposed heritage ethnonym in this project; modern name drawing on pre-colonial frameworks; adoption would require research, consensus, and collective decision.

Scroll IV

1776–1863

The Inhumanity of American Slavery

1787: Constitution counts each enslaved person as 3/5 of a person

1791–1804: Haitian Revolution intensifies U.S. slave laws

1808: Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves drives domestic slave trade

1830: Indian Removal Act expands land for slaveholding tribes

1850: Fugitive Slave Act (Compromise of 1850) mandates return of the enslaved to bondage

1857: Dred Scott decision denies U.S. citizenship to all Blacks

1863: Emancipation Proclamation starts process of abolition

Scroll V

1776–1863

Freedom Suits in U.S. Courts

How many animals have ever sued for their freedom? Only people do.

- *Somerset v. Stewart* (1772, England) — Not U.S., but hugely influential in American arguments that slavery had no support in common law.
- *Brom and Bett v. Ashley* (1781, Massachusetts) — Elizabeth “Mumbet” Freeman wins freedom under the MA Constitution.
- *Quock Walker cases* (1781–1783, Massachusetts) — Series culminating in *Commonwealth v. Jennison*; effectively ends slavery in MA.
- *Pleasants v. Pleasants* (1799, Virginia) — Court enforces Quaker manumission provisions; frees hundreds named in wills.
- *Hudgins v. Wrights* (1806, Virginia) — Family ruled free based on maternal Indian ancestry; court puts burden of proof on enslaver.
- *Marguerite (Scypion) v. Chouteau* (1805–1836, Missouri) — St. Louis “Indian slavery” suits; final ruling frees Marguerite and family.
- *Commonwealth v. Aves* (1836, Massachusetts) — Girl “Med” brought temporarily to Boston ruled free under state law.
- *Rachel v. Walker* (1836, Missouri) — Establishes “once free, always free” after residence on free soil (key precedent later undermined).
- *Charlotte Dupuy v. Henry Clay* (1829–1830, District of Columbia) — Freedom suit by Clay’s enslaved servant; ultimately denied, shows risks.
- *In re Ralph* (1839, Iowa Territory) — Territorial supreme court declares Ralph free within the territory (slavery unlawful there).
- *United States v. The Amistad* (1839–1841, U.S. Supreme Court) — Africans illegally trafficked are freed; landmark against the trade.
- *Polly Wash* (a.k.a. *Polly Berry*) freedom suit (1843–1845, St. Louis) — Mother wins; her daughter Lucy Ann Delaney also wins (1844).
- *Scott v. Emerson* → *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1852 Missouri; 1857 U.S. Supreme Court) — Ultimately loses; infamous decision denying Black citizenship.
- *Biddy Mason habeas case* (1856, California) — Judge frees Mason and her children after they’re held in a free state.
- *Lemmon v. The People* (1860, New York) — NY high court frees eight enslaved persons brought in transit by Virginia owners.

Scroll VI

1862–1865

Emancipation in Law vs. Reality

- **Apr 16, 1862** – D.C. Compensated Emancipation ends slavery in the nation’s capital.
- **Sept 22, 1862** – Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation announced; freedom to take effect Jan 1, 1863 in areas at war with the U.S.
- **Jan 1, 1863** – Emancipation Proclamation applies only to regions “in rebellion”; border states (KY, MO, MD, DE) and Union-occupied zones are excluded; enforcement follows the Union Army (e.g., General Order No. 3 in Texas, June 19, 1865 – Juneteenth).
- **1864–1865** – Several states abolish slavery on their own (MD 1864; MO Jan 1865; WV Feb 1865), while others (KY, DE) do not before the federal amendment.
- **Mar 3, 1865** – Congress creates the Freedmen’s Bureau to aid and protect the formerly enslaved; protection is uneven.
- **Dec 6, 1865** – Thirteenth Amendment ratified, abolishing slavery nationwide with a penal-labor exception (except as punishment for crime); post-war Black Codes and convict leasing seek to re-enslave in practice.

Scroll VII

1865–1877

Reconstruction: Promise and Betrayal

- **Bureau aids millions (1865–1872) even as Black Codes and terror rise.**
 - **Civil Rights Act (1866); Fourteenth (1868) and Fifteenth (1870) Amendments.**
- **Enforcement Acts (1870–1871) vs. the Klan.**
- **Slaughter-House (1873) and Cruikshank (1876) narrow federal protection.**
- **1877 withdrawal ends Reconstruction; Jim Crow and convict leasing spread.**

Scroll VIII

1865–1866

Black Codes: Law, Not Just “Custom”

- **Southern states pass laws to control Black labor and movement after emancipation.**
- **Yearly labor contracts required; leaving early = arrest.**
- **Vagrancy = crime; fines lead to hiring out and forced labor.**
- **Courts can “apprentice” Black children—often to former enslavers.**
- **Restrictions on travel, firearms, court testimony, jury service, and certain jobs.**
- **Enforcement by sheriffs and courts feeds convict leasing.**

Scroll IX

1862

Paying Enslavers, Pressuring Emigration

- **Apr 16, 1862: Congress ends slavery in Washington, D.C., and pays enslavers up to \$300 per person via a special Emancipation Commission.**
- **The freed receive no reparations; the law offers only an optional \$100 if they emigrate abroad (e.g., Liberia or Haiti).**
- **1863–1864: A federal-backed colonization scheme to Île à Vache (Haiti) relocates about 450 people; the venture collapses and survivors are rescued.**
- **Passports weren't required then; emigrants traveled on chartered ships under contracts and manifests—not modern IDs.**
- **Outside D.C., proposals to compensate enslavers fail; emancipation proceeds by war measure (1863) and the 13th Amendment (1865) with no payments to owners. How many animals get paid to relocate? None.**

Scroll X

1866

Tribal Treaties and Freedmen Citizenship

- **New treaties with the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations abolish slavery and address Freedmen status.**
 - **Treaties promise citizenship and rights to Freedmen and their descendants (terms vary by nation).**
 - **Compliance is uneven: later constitutions, rolls, and “by-blood” rules narrow or contest Freedmen rights.**
 - **Dawes-era enrollment (1890s–1900s) hardens exclusions and affects land allotments.**
 - **Disputes over Tribal Freedmen citizenship continue into the present.**
- Treaties promised inclusion; later policies tried to erase it.**

Scroll XI

1816-1870

Liberia & U.S. Colonization Plans

- **1816: American Colonization Society formed to resettle free Black people outside the U.S.**
- **1820–1824: First voyages; colony named Liberia (1824).**
- **1838–1847: Commonwealth → independence; an Americo-Liberian elite forms alongside Indigenous Liberian nations.**
- **1820s–1860s: Roughly 13k–16k African Americans emigrate; many die from disease, others build communities.**
- **1862: U.S. formally recognizes Liberia; the same year, D.C. pays enslavers and dangles \$100 to freed people who emigrate.**
- **1863–1864: Federal-backed scheme to Île à Vache (Haiti) moves ~450 people; the project collapses and survivors are rescued.**
- **Most Freedmen remain in the U.S., committed to claiming rights at home.**

How many animals get paid to relocate? None.

Scroll XII

1901-1921

Oklahoma Statehood, Disenfranchisement & Tulsa

- **1901–1906: Statehood planning in Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory; segregationists push voter restrictions.**
- **1907: Oklahoma Constitution adopts a grandfather clause tying the vote to ancestors who could vote before 1866—disenfranchising most Freedmen Descendants.**
- **1910–1914: Additional registration hurdles and literacy tests deepen Black disenfranchisement.**
- **1915: Guinn v. United States strikes Oklahoma’s grandfather clause as unconstitutional; the state responds with new barriers (1916 “re-registration” law).**
- **1900s–1910s: Dozens of all-Black towns (e.g., Boley, Langston) grow despite hostility.**
- **1921: White mobs destroy Tulsa’s Greenwood (“Black Wall Street”), killing scores to hundreds and displacing thousands—including families of Cherokee Freedmen. Rights on paper were evaded in practice**

Scroll XIII

1865–1874

Freedmen's Savings Bank: Promise & Collapse

- **1865** — Congress charters the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company to safeguard the earnings of the freed (separate from the Freedmen's Bureau).
- **1865–1870** — Dozens of branches open; 60,000+ depositors entrust hard-won wages to a bank carrying the federal name and imagery.
- **Fine print** — Despite the name, there is no federal guarantee; marketing and symbolism create a false sense of safety.
- **1870–1873** — Charter changes and speculative lending (railroads/real estate) expose deposits to high risk; the Panic of 1873 cripples assets.
- **1874** — Frederick Douglass becomes president, finds insolvency, and urges closure; on June 29, 1874 the bank fails.
- **Aftermath** — Most families recover little or nothing; lifetime savings vanish, stalling Black homebuilding, schooling, and business growth.
- **Legacy** — Trust is shattered for generations; capital that should have seeded Freedmen prosperity is erased. Law and logos looked protective—oversight wasn't.

Scroll XIV

1870s-1900

From Black Codes to Jim Crow & Convict Leasing

- **After Reconstruction, states repackaging Black Codes into Jim Crow statutes and “vagrancy”/“pig-law” offenses to control labor.**
- **Disenfranchisement spreads: poll taxes, literacy tests, “understanding” clauses, white primaries, grandfather clauses (e.g., upheld in *Williams v. Mississippi*, 1898).**
- **Supreme Court retrenchment: *Slaughter-House* (1873), *Cruikshank* (1876), *Civil Rights Cases* (1883) curb federal protection; *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) sanctions “separate but equal.”**
- **Segregation mandates reach schools, transit, public accommodations, marriage, and more.**
- **Convict leasing and chain gangs: sheriffs and courts funnel people into leased labor for mines, farms, and railroads—slavery by another name.**
- **Punishment economics: states profit from lease fees; employers extract cheap labor in deadly conditions; arrests spike with labor demand.**
- **Federal anti-peonage law exists, but enforcement is weak in this era (e.g., *Clyatt v. United States*, 1905).**
- **Result: a racial caste restored through law, police, and profit—setting today’s wealth and power gaps.**
Law replaced slavery with punishment economics

Scroll XV

1910–1970

The Great Migration & Racial Pogroms

- **1910–1940 — First Great Migration:** millions leave the South for Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh, New York, Philadelphia and other cities seeking safety, wages, and schools.
- **1917 — East St. Louis massacre** signals that northern industry does not equal safety.
- **1919 — Red Summer:** riots and massacres erupt in dozens of cities (e.g., Chicago, Washington, D.C.); state protection is inconsistent or absent.
- **1921 — Tulsa’s Greenwood (“Black Wall Street”)** destroyed; thousands displaced; losses uncompensated.
- **1923 — Rosewood, Florida, destroyed;** survivors flee and properties are stolen under threat.
- **1940–1970 — Second Great Migration:** millions move to the North and West (Los Angeles, Oakland, Seattle, etc.); defense jobs pull while Jim Crow pushes.
- **Barriers meet migrants:** job ceilings, union exclusions in skilled trades, housing covenants, “sundown towns,” police brutality.
- **Segregated schools and services follow the color line;** “urban renewal” later clears Black neighborhoods without repair.
- **Result:** new centers of Black life, culture, and politics—built under duress and too often targeted by violence and policy.
We moved for freedom; the color line followed

Scroll XVI

1916–1927

Marcus Garvey & the UNIA

- **1916** — Marcus Garvey arrives in the United States; the UNIA grows rapidly amid the Great Migration.
 - **1918** — Garvey launches the Negro World newspaper, spreading a global message of race pride and enterprise.
 - **1919–1922** — Black Star Line steamship venture raises capital and hope; beset by sabotage, mismanagement, and lawsuits; operations collapse.
 - **Mass organizing** — Parades, uniforms, and conventions build morale, mutual aid, and business networks.
 - **Tensions** — Strategic rifts with other Black leaders and organizations over aims and methods.
 - **Federal scrutiny** — J. Edgar Hoover's bureau surveils Garvey;
 - **1923–1927** — Garvey convicted of mail fraud (1923), imprisoned (1925), sentence commuted in 1927, and deported the same year.
 - **Legacy** — UNIA uplifted millions, yet it was transnational and not a U.S. federal, lineage-specific remedy for Freedmen Descendants.
- Pride rose—but without enforceable, lineage-based law, repair did not.**

Scroll XVII

1930s–1960s

New Deal Exclusions, Redlining, GI Bill

- **1935 – Social Security Act excludes farmworkers and domestic workers from old-age and unemployment insurance—jobs held disproportionately by Black workers.**
- **1935 – Wagner Act (NLRA) protects organizing but excludes farm/ domestic labor; many craft unions bar Black membership.**
- **1933–1938 – HOLC risk maps and FHA underwriting embed redlining; credit steers to segregated suburbs, away from Black neighborhoods.**
- **1930s–1950s – Restrictive covenants and exclusionary zoning enforce color lines; Shelley v. Kraemer (1948) stops courts from enforcing covenants, but private discrimination persists.**
- **1944–1950s – GI Bill (VA & FHA mortgages, tuition, business loans) is locally administered; Black veterans face admissions denials and loan refusals.**
- **1950s–1960s – Urban renewal and highway projects raze Black business districts and homes; displacement without repair.**

Result – Subsidized white suburban wealth; blocked Black asset-building; intergenerational wealth and housing gaps that endure.

Policy built advantage into the map; FBRMA repairs the map and the balance sheet.

Scroll XVIII

1955–1970

Movements & Rights: From Protest to Federal Law

- 1955–1956 — Montgomery Bus Boycott launches the modern mass movement; *Browder v. Gayle* (1956) ends bus segregation.
- 1960 — Greensboro sit-ins spread; SNCC forms to sustain youth-led direct action.
- 1961 — Freedom Rides test desegregation of interstate travel; federal enforcement follows violence.
- 1963 — Birmingham campaign and the March on Washington push Congress toward comprehensive civil-rights law.
- 1964 — Civil Rights Act outlaws segregation and job discrimination (public accommodations, employment, federally funded programs).
- 1965 — Selma–Montgomery marches lead to the Voting Rights Act (preclearance, federal examiners).
- 1966–1969 — Black Power era: community survival programs (food, clinics) grow; COINTELPRO targets organizers.
- 1967 — Kerner Commission warns the nation is moving toward “two societies, separate and unequal.”
- 1968 — Fair Housing Act passes after Dr. King’s assassination; enforcement remains uneven..
Protest moved hearts; federal law moved the floor—yet without repair, the wound remained.

Scroll XIX

1970-Present

Mass Incarceration & Carceral Labor

- 1970s — “War on Drugs” policing expands; early mandatory minimums and state drug laws (e.g., Rockefeller) drive arrests.
- 1980s — Mandatory minimums and the 100:1 crack–powder disparity (1986) supercharge long sentences; private prisons and prison industries grow.
- 1984–1987 — Federal sentencing guidelines and “truth in sentencing” policies reduce judicial discretion and lengthen actual time served.
- 1994 — Crime bill funds more police and prisons; grants reward longer sentences; supervision rules tighten.
- 2000s — Peak imprisonment; probation/parole technical violations recycle people back to prison without new crimes.
- Carceral labor — The 13th Amendment exception allows forced labor “as punishment”; wages are pennies; work includes farms, factories, call centers, wildfire crews.
- Family wealth drain — Fines/fees, bail, phone/commissary costs and lost income strip savings; housing, jobs, and education carry collateral consequences.
- Disparities — Policing, charging, and sentencing hit Freedmen Descendants hardest; felony disenfranchisement dilutes civic power.
- Partial reforms — 2010 crack-sentencing fix (18:1), some record relief and reentry steps, 2018 federal reforms—yet gaps remain.

The punishment economy replaced stolen labor with captive labor; FBRMA replaces it with repair.

Scroll XX

Naming Ourselves & Why FBRMA Now

Records, DNA, and the Reparative Path

- **Identity & scope** — We are Freedmen Descendants: a lineage-based people in U.S. law and history; color labels blurred claims—law must count lineage.
- **Evidence standard** — Pair archival records (census, rolls, land, court, medical) with ethical DNA reference panels; create a DNA & Archives Unit with privacy-first rules and fraud prevention.
- **Citizenship & treaties** — Enforce 1866 treaty promises and Tribal Freedmen rights; end “by-blood only” exclusions in federal programs and compacts.
- **Governance** — Stand up a permanent Bureau of Freedmen Affairs with inspector general, court-enforceable rules, transparent data, and regional offices.
 - **FLID & credentials** — Issue secure Freedmen Lineage ID (FLID), Emancipation Acknowledgement Letters, and passport-style credentials for program access.
- **Land, housing, wealth** — Repair redlining-era losses; expand land access; seed cooperative housing, fair credit, and business capital (repair economics, not punishment economics).
- **Health & education** — Fund medical redress and community clinics; strengthen HBCUs and teacher/youth programs; protect burial grounds and repatriate remains.
 - **Justice & safety** — Dismantle the 13th-exception labor pipeline; invest in prevention, defense, reentry, and unbiased public safety for Freedmen communities.
 - **Implementation** — A ten-year Policy Action Plan with milestones, audits, and public dashboards; federal-state-tribal compacts where applicable.
- **The principle** — Law created the harm; only law, budget, and institutions can repair it.

Note: This is a focused timeline of major milestones; many other crucial events exist and further strengthen the case for FBRMA.
Repairing Now, for the Future.