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The Movement and Culture of African Americans in California

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The Movement and Culture of African Americans in California



Photo of early African American Settlers Andrew Monroe. Photo from Monroe Collection

Kale Leach
Africana Studies
Senior Capstone
Research Essay
Professor Vaughan
School of Humanities + Communication
Spring Semester 2019

Table of Contents

Capstone Proposal.....	1
Research Essay.....	3
Annotated Bibliography.....	18
Final Synthesis Essay.....	24
Current Resume.....	27

Senior Capstone Project Proposal Essay Option

1. Kale Leach/ Africana Studies
2. The main focus of my essay would be on African American culture and how it changes through at regions North, East, and West. I chose this focus because I am an African American man living on the west coast and I would like to see how other African Americans culture can differ and compares to mine.
3. The theme for our class is Diaspora which is defined as the disbursement of a group of people from their homeland, Africans first diaspora is when they were taken from Africa during the slave trade, but the second diaspora is a few generations later when slavery was being outlawed or they were escaping, this forced slaves off plantations (one homeland) to new places outside of southern states.
4. My projects primary focus is to compare and contrast African American culture throughout the united states. I want to find out what traditions have been passed down, and how they might differ throughout regions.
5. The African American Diaspora
6. Africans were brought to the Americas against their own will and forced to do unpaid labor for two hundred years. Over these years they were forced to forget the homeland and the traditions they had. Creating new traditions in the south the African American became a new race of people, but with slavery being outlawed, and the south being too dangerous for them to live, many African Americans fled to nearby states. The east coast, west coast and northern states were flooded with Black. Similar to the original African diaspora blacks' traditions and culture changed. With new cultures in each region, it is time to know what parts of the culture changed and differed.

7. When it comes to sources I will have a focus on African American culture, so oral history, journals, and databases will be my main focus.

8. The first step I would take on my research essay would be to narrow down what parts of African American culture I want to do, following I would find the resources that go with it. After gathering that information, I would create an outline. After creating my outline, I would work on my first draft of the paper, Following the rough draft, I would conclude with the final draft.

9. Timeline

a. Chosen Cultures- February 25th

b. Resources- March 4th

c. Outline- March 11th

d. Project draft- March 13th

e. Final Project- April 22nd

Abstract

Africans were brought into the new world in the early 17th century, with a majority of slaves being brought in to the United States. These slaves were forced to leave their African traditions and roots behind, and assimilate to white European culture, thus creating the African American or Blacks. African Americans then began to create their own culture and subculture, integrating what they had left of their ancestors' culture and what they have gained from white European culture. As slavery was fading out of the US Blacks needed a place where they could feel safe and thrive in this new society where blacks were now free. They headed in every direction away from the south. Settling in large cities like New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. With African Americans being spread out the culture is being influenced across the country, creating a new African American Diaspora.

A large number of African Americans headed west to the New territory of California, and today it shows having the largest population of African Americans outside of the south. African Americans have created their own culture here in California, but its roots still hold deep to their southern ancestors.

The Great Migration/To the West

The Geography of the Great Migration

The Migration of African Americans from the American South (1910-1970)

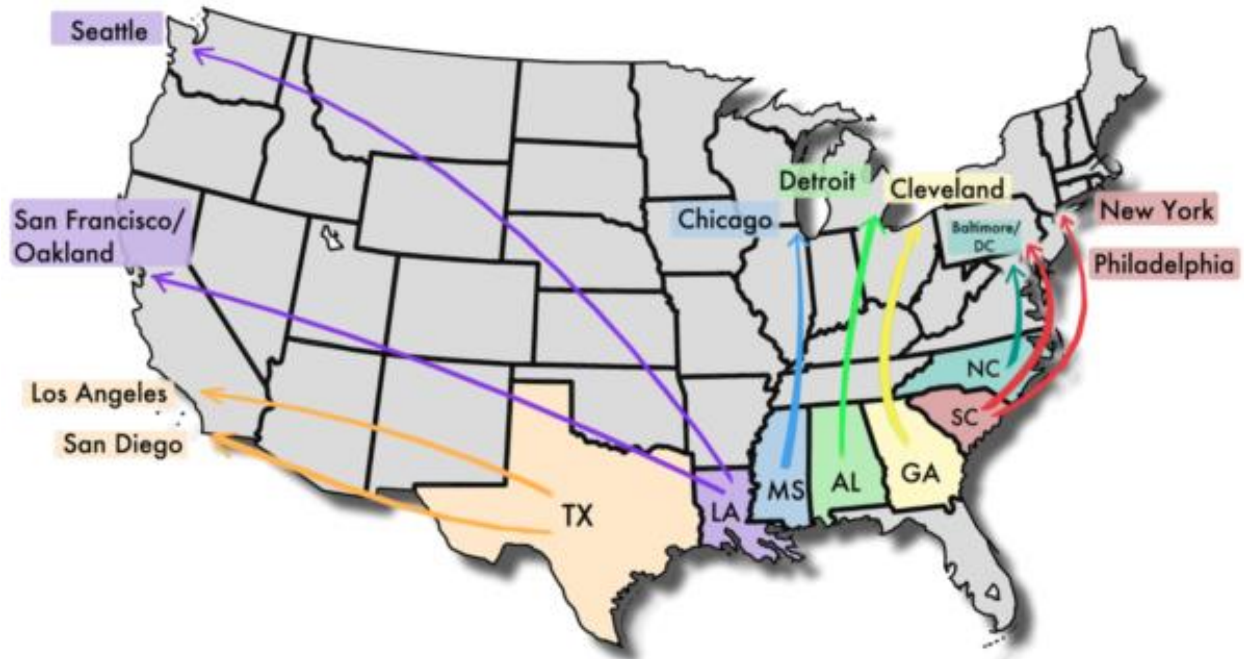


Figure 1

The first Great Migration took place in the late 19th and early 20th century and was the displacement of 1.5 million African Americans outside of the South. African Americans were looking to find salvation as they were freed from slavery and knew they had to get out of the south, because the honeymoon phase of the reconstruction era was wearing off and racism becoming pronounced in the south, with Jim Crow laws, lynching and segregation, it was not safe for any African Americans. There were several reasons that African Americans were drawn to the North. According to James N Gregory of University of Washington “Jobs in the North were part of the lure, especially as labor shortages encouraged companies to relax customary whites-only hiring restrictions.” The first world war was drawing in the white men, so industrial jobs were opening up, and African American men could fulfill this missing labor force. Major Northern cities like New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Detroit’s African American population

grew anywhere from 50 to 600 percent. (History) With large numbers of African Americans in these new northern cities living was a problem, even though there were no legal segregation laws, whites found new ways to exclude Blacks. So Black people began to create their own communities within these big cities, for example Harlem, New York, which is famously well known for The Harlem Renaissance. The great migration did not only send Blacks to the North, but some also began to head west.

When the second world war started so did the second great migration, with 5 million African Americans leaving the south. Similar to the first there were jobs opening up in industrial cities, but now the west coast was a new destination because of US aircraft plants. Africans Americans were welcomed to these plants, but the south was only becoming more dangerous, so they knew it was better off searching for jobs than staying in racist territory. According to the African American Migration Experience

“Western communities, on the other hand, were usually experiencing a large influx of African Americans for the first time, and they arrived as part of a vast shift of the general population. Eight million Americans moved west of the Mississippi after 1940, half of them to the Pacific coast. There were 171,000 African Americans in the West in 1940, but 620,000 by 1945. Between the spring of 1942 and 1945 alone, 340,000 African Americans settled in California.”

California was obviously the main western state affected by the second great migration but others like Oregon and Washington. Depending on where they were determined if they prospered and failed, and this was city to city, for example in Oakland after the war Blacks were forced out of the work force again but right across the bay African American men were joining unions and excelling in the work force.

Diaspora/ African American Diaspora

According to Eliezer Ben-Rafael “‘Diaspora’, a word of Greek origin, designates the dispersal throughout the world of a people with the same origin.” The African Diaspora took place the moment the African slave trade began in the 16th century. Africans were being dropped off all along the New World to work on plantations that produced; sugar, tobacco and cotton, to boost European economy. With Africans being placed in countries that were colonized by different European countries. The slaves assimilated to their colonizers culture while at the same time keeping some of their motherland’s traditions. We see examples of this all across South America, especially within the Caribbean where island to island the traditions are different because of who the colonizers were. The differences that are seen have to do with their religion, music, language, etc.

A way to learn about diaspora is to take something like music from the motherland and watch as it branches off from each country that the people live in, The United States now has rap, r and b, rock, country and South America has Samba, Salsa, Merengue, Bachata, Timba all these styles have influences of African music and this is because of the slave trade. The African diaspora is not the only diaspora to ever take place, it is even to have diasporas take place within families, but since the Africans have been in the United States long enough to spread out across America the second diaspora with the descendants of the African slaves of the first diaspora.

There is now a diaspora that takes place with the African American community. Each coast has taken the culture of our ancestors and put their own touch into it. Just like any race in the United States no city, state, or coast have anything in common. With African Americans it is different, because most came from the deep south, and within one or two generations ago lived

our cultures have carried across the US. Subcultures such as music, religion, dance, what we eat can all be linked back to our time in southern states

Politics

The first steps to African American politics happened before slavery was ended and took place in Philadelphia in the 1830 at conventions of free blacks that focused on the abolishment of slavery. After The next step in gaining political power was in 1865 when the 13th amendment was passed, and slavery was abolished. This opened new doors allowing for blacks to get their natural human rights back like every other American citizen. The 15th amendment then gave African Americans the right to vote and allowing for blacks to take office. Hiram Rhodes Revel was the first African American to serve in the US congress as a senator from 1869- 1871 for the republican party. Hiram Revel was the first of many



Figure 2 Hiram Rhodes Revel

African Americans to participate in the US government and has direct relation today to African Americans in office.

On the west coast the first African American elected to political office was Fredrick Madison Rodgers in 1918 to the California state assembly. In the 116th congress today there are 57 African American members and of those members 5 of them are from the west coast and all California. To this day there has never been an African American senator or representative in the states of Washington and Oregon.

California has the largest demographic of African Americans since the second Great migration, so it makes sense that out of off all the states west of the Mississippi they have had the

most in office. The first ever representative was Augustus
Freeman Hawkins in the year 1963 and in just out last election
for Kamala Harris is the first ever senator color in California.



Figure 3 Kamala Davis

Religion

Africans came to the United States with their own religions, but because slave owners feared diversity, Africans were forced to forget their religions and adopt the religion of the colonizers. The main religion of US settlers was Christianity, but Africans added their own twist to the religion, they took their own rhythms and songs and combined the two. This gives us some of the songs we hear in predominantly black churches today. As slavery was being abolished many joined evangelical religions like Methodist and Baptist faiths the reason behind this was the message from those religions was everyone was equal in God's eyes. Whites preferred that slaves attend white controlled churches because if they had their own, they might begin plotting rebellions, but this did not stop slaves from creating invisible institutions. These institutions gave slaves strength and power and hopes for freedom.

When it comes to African American religion in California St Andrews African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church was the first established African Methodist church in Sacramento by a few black settlers in 1850. 20 years later in Los Angeles First African Methodist Episcopal Church was established by Bridget Mason. This church is considered one of the largest African American congregations in all the states. There are nearly a hundred churches in California that are apart of the African Methodist Episcopal church.

Representation in Media

The African American stereotype has been around ever since Africans were brought to America and only evolves to fit the year. Black men are considered violent, dumb and lazy while Black women are voluptuous and exotic. These stereotypes made it into American media and were the only way blacks were represented for years. According to “The Complicated Politics of Little Black Sambo” One of the earliest representations in America is Little Black Sambo a 1899 children story about a west Indian boy hiding from tigers. The boy is depicted as extremely dark skinned with a wide nose and large pink lips. Sambo wasn’t only there were

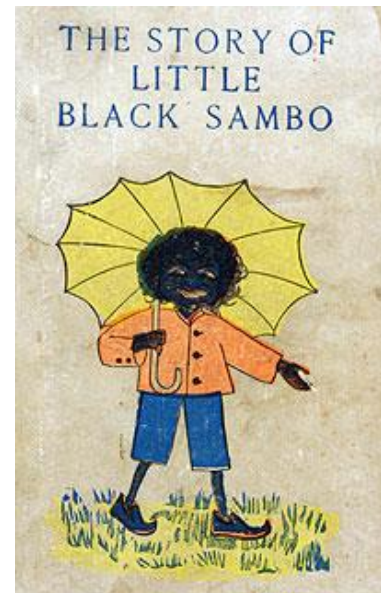


Figure 4 Cover to *The Story of Little Black Sambo*

pickaninny and the caricature who look almost identical. According to the Jim Crowe museum of racist memorabilia sambo and the coon caricature both represented, “as a lazy, easily frightened, chronically idle, inarticulate, buffoon”. This then led to the film industry where we saw the stereotypical representation of blacks in Stepin Fetchit. He was slow talking walking and talked in the most uneducated voice possible.

California lays hold to the most popular film industry in the world Hollywood. The African American has been represented in Hollywood since the early 20th century. One of the earliest Hollywood movies and representations of Blacks is Birth of a Nation created by D.W. Griffith in 1915. Which is racist propaganda, about the end of the civil war and the ku klux klan saving the south from blacks who were running it during the reconstruction era. In an NPR segment titled “100 Years Later, What's The Legacy Of 'Birth Of A Nation'?” they state that “[Griffith] portrayed the emancipated slaves as heathens, as unworthy of being free, as

uncivilized, as primarily concerned with passing laws so they could marry white women and prey on them,”” which went hand in hand with any other representation of blacks in media at the time. Fast forward to today and black representation in Hollywood has completely changed.

Today the second highest paid actor in Hollywood is a black man, according to Forbes Dwayne Johnson made 162 million dollars in 2018. Not only that but Mahershala Ali has won back to back Oscars for his supporting roles in Green Book and Moonlight. We have also had movies like Black Panther which cast was predominantly black actors and directed by a black film maker as well. The Coon stereotype is not forgotten but has been lost in today’s black culture.

Biggest influences

African Americans have always had influence on American Culture and this started in the deep south. These influences were on music, art, social movements and much more. Without people like Harriet Tubman, Zora Neal Hurston, Bessie Smith American culture would be missing key components from what it is built on. A music. California today has been home to several people who would be considered some of the biggest influencers in our culture. Jackie Robinson and NWA.



Figure 5 Photo of Jackie Robinson

One of the most influential people to be raised in California is Jackie Robison, according to his biography he was Born in Cairo, Georgia in 1919 he was raised by his mother in Pasadena. He then attended University of California Los Angeles where he played Baseball, Track, Basketball and football. Jackie Robison defied all odds in a time where racism was at a high and broke the color barrier of professional sports. He influenced other teams and sports to allow African Americans to join their teams. His legacy his remembered-on April 15th every year where every single major league baseball player wear number 42.

Another huge influential group of African Americans is the group Niggas with Attitude a rap group of five African American men originated out of Compton California. They were the originators of Gangsta rap. During the eighties and nineties when drugs, police brutality, and gang violence was at a high NWA was not afraid to rap about it. They influenced many other African Americans to voice their opinion. NWA was able to influence through the way they

rapped, they had no filter and blatantly stated what they were rapping about using profanity. They are most famous for songs like Fuck tha Police, a song about police officers purposely targeting minorities. In the lyrics stating they even state “A young nigga got it bad ‘cause I'm brown And not the other color, so police think They have the authority to kill a minority”. It was songs like this that kept them off the radio, but also spread the word. Ice Cube himself even said, “ Everything in the world came after this group. ... We changed pop culture on all levels. Not just music. We changed it on TV. In movies. On radio. Everything”.

A recent influencer and just as important as the other two names might not be as well known around the united states but what she created is. Alicia Garza was born and raised in Oakland; she went on to attend University of California San Diego. Alicia Garza is one of the cofounders of Black Lives Matter. According to the black lives matter website, “ Garza has become a powerful voice in the media. Her articles and interviews have been featured in Time, Mic, The Guardian, Elle.com, Essence, Democracy Now!, and The New York Times.” Her voice is known nationally and what she has done and is still doing is worldwide. The Black Lives matter goal is“ working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise”.

Education

An educated slave was feared upon during slavery because southern slaveholders feared they would use their knowledge to convince other slaves to revolt, and in some cases, they were right like the Nat Turn revolt. But slaves who could read and write were highly idolized in the slave community. Religion played a huge part in slaves wanting to be educated. Receiving education on plantations was tough because it wasn't offered to them, so it usually was passed down in a communal effort, with one slave who has already learned teaching those around him or her. In some cases slave masters would allow for the slave children to be educated, but they didn't make it easy for them slaves were always working in the fields and when they did have time to learn "white teachers usually offered restricted curricula deemed appropriate for slaves." according to Thirteenth.org. Slaves did not let these restrictions prevent the, from learning and it reveals itself in the latter year of slavery with all the educated slaves who took part in abolition.

Unlike the South, California has focused and put time in trying to help African American students. According to Education Trust-West since 1992 California African American's have been improving their math and reading. But there is still a large achievement gap when it comes to the California education standards between Black students, and their white and Asian counterparts. This gap has existed for over a quarter century, and many have tried to deal with it for years. Recently in 2017 the San Francisco NAACP declared a state of emergency because of the education gap. They said, "It goes back to the 1970s, when the San Francisco NAACP sued the school district for alleged discriminatory practices and purposeful segregation." Like the South, African Americans were being held back by whites but in "1983 federal consent decree that capped enrollment at no more than 45 percent of one race at any San Francisco public school" this was installed to keep schools more diverse.

In Secondary education black students have also shown progress in attending and completing college, but like primary education there is still a gap between races. According to EdSource, this has to do with the lack of preparation for high school, poverty and lack of black faculty. A 2016-2017 report shows that only 35 percent of black students meet the A-G requirements that allow them to attend UC or CSU schools this comes behind Latinos, white, NHPI and Asian. All the way around we see a gap, in the six-year completion rate at UC blacks graduate at around 75 percent while whites are at 86 percent, at CSU's the gap is even larger with blacks being 43 percent to white's 67 percent. The difference between today and in the south, 100 years ago, is people are trying to change and help African Americans succeed whereas in recent years they were trying to make them fail.

Black Culture in Los Angeles and Bay Area

As African Americans headed west, they landed in two parts of California, The large city of Los Angeles and The Bay Area. Even though these two cities have the highest percent of African Americans in California, if you were to ask an African American from one of these cities how similar they are to each other? They would probably laugh and tell you how different they are . When it comes to all aspects of black culture, music, dance, language, how they dress, everything is different. This is the perfect example of a diaspora. In reality both of these cities' roots are based out of Sothern country and can be dissected.

Los Angeles and the surrounding area holds the largest African American population on the west coast according to black demographics. With Los Angeles has always been a diverse city, allowing for black culture to thrive. Los Angles has possibly on of the strongest influences on the United states mainstream culture. That being said most of the mainstream culture in LA come from Black Culture. When you think black Culture in LA your probably think of Hip Hop and Rap, but there is more to it than that. LA has several places like the African American Fire Fighter Center, which “collects, conserves and shares the heritage of pioneering African Americans in the fire service”. They also have the California African American Museum which is a museum dedicated to preserving African American culture.



Figure 6 Photo of the California African American Museum

Oakland population of African Americans but the culture and history of African Americans might be greater. In 1966 Huey P Newton and Bobby Seale created the Black Panther party. According to black past their goal was to create a revolutionary black political

party. The black panther party was one of the most influential groups on that black community in recent years. Oakland also lays hold to several sites of black culture like, African American Museum & Library if Oakland, Dr Huey P Newton Foundation, Museum of African American Technology Science Village. The Goal of the Huey P Newton foundation is to preserve the black panther party. The Oakland area is also very involved with Black Culture today, the Black Lives Matter group is also partially based out Oakland and there influence on black culture has shifted the way people think in recent years.

Annotated Bibliography

“African American Achievement in California .” *The Education Trust- West*, 2004,
west.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/02/African-American-Achievement-in-California.pdf .

The African American Achievement in California is an article with information on African Americans in secondary education. In my essay I used this information to give clear cut statistics to back up my points on African American education.

“An Artistic Rebirth .” *African - An Artistic Rebirth - Immigration...- Classroom Presentation / Teacher Resources - Library of Congress*, 2019,
www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/african8.html.

An Artistic Rebirth is an article about African Americans in the south who were artist, writers and more. I used this article for facts and information about African americans who influenced American culture in the south.

“Black-American Representatives and Senators by State and Territory, 1870–Present | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives.” *Black-American Representatives and Senators by State and Territory | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives*, 2019, history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Data/Black-American-Representatives-and-Senators-by-State-and-Territory/.

This is a website that has a list of every African American senator or representative to date in the United States. This page was extremely useful when trying to discover who was a California senator or representative.

Davis, John A. "The Influence of Africans on American Culture." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 354, 1964, pp. 75–83. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1035320.

This journal is about the influence of African culture on American culture. This allowed for my essay to have historical comparison to the and west.

"Discover African American Culture in Los Angeles." *Discover Los Angeles*, 2019, www.discoverlosangeles.com/things-to-do/discover-african-american-culture-in-los-angeles.

This is an article about African American Culture in Los Angeles. iarticle helped with the section of Los Angeles vs Oakland. I was able to find several historical sites and museums that could reflect black culture in LA.

Editors, History.com. "Great Migration." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 4 Mar. 2010, www.history.com/topics/black-history/great-migration.

This article is about the first great migration of African Americans to the north. Its purpose in my essay was to give background of African Americans moving out of the south, to get away from racism and Jim Crowe.

Gordon, Larry. "California's Black Students Lag in College Completion despite Some Gains." *EdSource*, 20 Feb. 2019, edsources.org/2019/californias-black-students-lag-in-college-completion-despite-some-gains/608854.

This article summarizes how African American children are behind when it comes to secondary education. This article allowed for my paper to have factual information under my header of education. It also helped compare how African Americans have always been behind when it comes to education.

Jeyathurai, Dashini. "The Complicated Racial Politics of Little Black Sambo." *South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA)*, South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), 6 Feb. 2018, www.saada.org/tides/article/little-black-sambo.

This is an article about the racist caricature of Little Black Sambo. This article was used to describe how African Americans were represented in the south, compared to how African Americans are represented today in the west.

Kennedy, Gerrick D. "The Moment N.W.A Changed the Music World." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 9 Dec. 2017, www.latimes.com/entertainment/music/la-et-ms-nwa-parental-discretion-20171205-htmlstory.html.

This article is about how the rap group NWA a huge influence on the music world in the eighties and nineties. This was important to my essay because this is a Los Angeles rap group and their influence came from those before them who would speak out during the civil rights movement.

Lyons, Jenna. "NAACP Calls for 'State of Emergency' to Close Achievement Gap in SF Schools." *SFChronicle.com*, San Francisco Chronicle, 25 Nov. 2017, www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/NAACP-calls-for-state-of-emergency-to-close-12382702.php.

This article is about primary education in San Francisco and how there should've been a state of emergency because of the low success rates of Black students. This helped prove the point that African Americans had to face similar problems as the south when it came to education.

Maffly-Kipp, Laurie. "African American Christianity, Pt. I: To the Civil War." *African American Christianity, Pt. I: To the Civil War, The Nineteenth Century, Divining America: Religion in American History*, TeacherServe, National Humanities Center, 2019, nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/aareligion.htm.

This article can be summarized as information about African American's religion in the south. This was used in the essay to compare religion in the west and south.

"Our Co-Founders." *Black Lives Matter*, 2019, blacklivesmatter.com/about/our-co-founders/.

This is the webpage to the co-founders of Black Lives Matter. I used this article for background information on Alicia Garza.

Pilgrim, David. "The Coon Caricature." *The Coon Caricature - Anti-Black Imagery - Jim Crow Museum - Ferris State University*, 2012, www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/coon/.

This is an article about the coon caricature a depiction of black people in the south in the in the Jim Crow era. This is important to the representation of Black people in media in the deep south.

“REVELS, Hiram Rhodes.” *US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives*, 2019, [history.house.gov/People/Listing/R/REVELS,-Hiram-Rhodes-\(R000166\)/](https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/R/REVELS,-Hiram-Rhodes-(R000166)/).

This is an article about the first black person to become a representative in the US Congress. It is important to the history of politics in Black America.

“Slavery and the Making of America . The Slave Experience: Education, Arts, & Culture | PBS.” *THIRTEEN*, 2019, www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/education/history2.html.

This article is about a deeper history of slavery including things like art education and culture. I used this article as a base for my essay giving me ideas of what I should research.

Staff, NPR. “100 Years Later, What's The Legacy Of 'Birth Of A Nation'?” *NPR*, NPR, 8 Feb. 2015, www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/02/08/383279630/100-years-later-whats-the-legacy-of-birth-of-a-nation.

This is about the film “Birth of a Nation” and its effect on African Americans. This was used to show how Blacks were represented in film and how different it is from the representation.

“The Black Panther Party: Seattle and the Nation • BlackPast.” *BlackPast*, 2019, www.blackpast.org/special-features/the-black-panther-party-seattle-and-the-nation/.

This article had basic information about the Black Panther Party. I used this to show how the city of Oakland has had a long past with African American culture.

“The Second Great Migration.” *AAME*, 2019,

www.inmotionaame.org/print.cfm;jsessionid=f830737971553271930799?migration=9&bhcp=1.

The article gives a brief history of the second great migration, where Blacks during World War 2 decided to move to the west coast for jobs. This was used heavily in the history of Blacks moving to the west coast.

Tillotson, Mary. “Jackie Robinson, 1919-1972: The First Black Player in Modern Major League Baseball.” *VOA*, VOA, 4 Apr. 2009, learningenglish.voanews.com/a/a-23-2009-04-04-voa1-83144212/130584.html.

This was transcription of a radio show talking about Jackie Robinson and his history. This was used to show how Jackie Robinson was a huge impact on sports.

Trsek, Kelly. “First African Methodist Episcopal Church, Los Angeles, California (1872-) • BlackPast.” *BlackPast*, 31 Jan. 2019, www.blackpast.org/aaw/first-african-methodist-episcopal-church-1872/.

This is an article about the First African Methodist Episcopal Church. This helped with the religion aspect of my paper.

Synthesis Essay

HCOM 475 with Professor Vaughn had the class theme of Diaspora, the movement of a group of people out of their homeland. As a class, we had to learn the basics of diaspora, and then how to incorporate that into our own projects. To fully learn about diaspora, we had a group and individual projects that helped understand the true meaning to diaspora and work it into us on work. With capstone coming to an end I have fully engulfed the meaning of diaspora which allowed for me to create an original project with the core theme of diaspora apart of it.

Diaspora is not a word used by your everyday person, having it as the class theme forced me to do research to fully understand the concept. Having taken professor Vaughn before I had already heard the word diaspora and had a basic definition of the word. With this, I was able to have a head start when it came to my overall project, but this also allowed me to help my peers in the class. In our class meetings, we would all come with questions for our professor, which would help us expand our knowledge on the class theme. Each class session leading up to our project, we focused on making sure that each and every one of us had a detailed definition of diaspora.

As a class, we had several assignments that focused on our class theme. One of these assignments was an essay where we had to breakdown our class theme of diaspora. This assignment was extremely helpful because it was an intro to the class theme, without it I didn't believe I would have ever fully grasped the concept. We also had group presentations throughout the whole year, where we read novels that had a theme of diaspora. As a group we had to break down the chapters we were assigned and give the class a brief summary of our chapters, each project finished with a question and answer part, most groups focused on getting the class to

dissect the book and find how our class theme relates. This was not the only group work we did, we also had two partner revisions, this allowed for us to get feedback from others and help our papers progress. Outside of class with my peers we helped each other as well, relying on each other for help if needed.

Being an African American male and having a teacher like Professor Vaughan, opened me up to a whole new lens on the world. Learning the African diaspora in other classes made me realize that I myself am a product of the diaspora. This is ultimately how I came upon the topic of my research essay. I chose to research the topic of African Americans migrating west to the south. I titled my essay The Movement and Culture of African Americans in California. I focused on researching how the south has influenced the new culture in the west. As I researched this I could personally relate. My grandparents both came to California in the west coast in the '50s, and I can see the influence of the south in their lives but at the same time, I can see how it is changed and assimilated to black culture of the west. The influence within my own family is strong and I have been lucky enough to go to the south and talk to my family members there and share the experiences of the life of those who stayed in the south. It was interesting to see the difference and this was another factor to why I chose my topic.

My essay being about the African American diaspora in the west is a direct connection to the class theme of diaspora. I focused strongly on taking parts of the culture I live in and comparing them to those of how African Americans lived in the south. I focused on things like history, politics, education and mainstream culture. I personally found writing about the difference between Los Angeles and Oakland most interesting. I am not from either of these cities so as I was finding out this information most of it was brand new to me. I found out about

some historical sites and museums, that when I go to these cities I would like to visit. I also found for there to be problems as well, for example, I had core topics chosen but as I did the research I found that it was impossible for some of these topics to be compared, with the help of my class I was able to find new topics and extend my paper.

When it came to meet the criteria for the project, I believed that I was able to meet every possible outcome. The paper was between 15-20 pages long, and I was able to include the annotated bibliography and resume. I found other ways to make the paper feel more personal by using certain tones. I also included pictures for the reader so they could have images to what they were reading about. I found the most difficult part is the length of the paper because I narrowed down my research topic a few times. If I would've broadened it just to maybe the west coast this would have made lengthening the paper much easier. Overall meeting the criteria for the paper was extremely easy.

Senior capstone has been an eye-opening experience for me. Most of my classes are based off the tempo of how the professor feels the class should go, but in capstone, this is the first time that I was able to control the outcome of the projects within the class. Without the help of my peers and professor, the class would not have run as smoothly and would have encountered more problems. The class theme was simple and allowed for freedom within projects and personally helped me choose the perfect topic for myself. Capstone and writing this paper have been a great experience.