



BACKSTORY: BLACK HISTORY MONTH PLAYLIST

February is **Black History Month**, so we've put together a selection of *BackStory* episodes and segments that illuminate the African-American experience in the story of the United States.

EPISODES

Fierce Urgency of Now: The 1963 March on Washington

This episode explores the origins, events, and impact of the 1963 "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," at which the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech.

Segments:

WASHINGTON AWAITS

Peter, Ed, and Brian discuss the scene in D.C. and the level of anxiety among Washington's white community, in the days running up to the march.

THE TELEVISED MARCH

Ed talks with media scholar Aniko Bodroghkozy about the television news coverage of the march, and how television played into the Civil Rights movement more generally.

A MARCH FOR JOBS AND FREEDOM

Historian William P. Jones talks with Brian about the origins of the march idea, first floated during a campaign against employment discrimination in the 1940s.

THE WORLD WATCHES...

Brian talks with historian Tom Jackson about the Kennedy administration's efforts to manage the march, and Peter, Ed, and Brian consider the international implications of the images coming out of the march – raising difficulties in the Cold War battle for ideas, but also playing into a global conversation about decolonization and liberation.

"LET FREEDOM RING!"

Historian David Blight talks with Ed about the continuing impact of the Civil War in shaping the context within which the march took place, and the particular importance of the Emancipation Proclamation in King's speech, which had been issued 100 years before.

BEING THERE

Ed sits down with Hank Thomas, a veteran freedom rider and participant in the march, and hears how that day, and the civil rights struggle, shaped his life.

WEB EXTRA: THE SECOND EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

Ed continues his conversation with historian David Blight, who reveals an important part of the backstory to the March on Washington, and Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech: King's efforts to persuade President John F. Kennedy to issue a "Second Emancipation Proclamation," and outlaw segregation by executive order.

Thenceforward and Forever Free: The Emancipation Proclamation

In this episode, Ed, Peter, and Brian dig into the context in which the Emancipation Proclamation was declared in 1863, the legal impact it had, and the ways we have understood it in the century and a half since.

Segments:

IMAGE PROBLEMS

Brian talks with art historian Kirk Savage about how Americans have memorialized Lincoln as "The Great Emancipator," and they examine how that image was used in an 1876 national monument.

A DELICATE MATTER

Historian David Blight describes the controversy that marked the Emancipation Proclamation's centennial.

JUST THE FACTS, MA'AM

Brian and Peter talk to legal historian Michael Vorenberg to nail down what exactly the Emancipation Proclamation did and didn't do.

PLAN B

The History Guys discuss Lincoln's anxieties over whether blacks and whites could live together peacefully in the wake of slavery, and ask what motivated his proposals to resettle freed persons outside the US.

VANTAGE POINTS

Ed talks with Christy Coleman on the varying perspectives towards the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in the South.

LISTENER CALL

Peter, Ed, and Brian take a call from a listener, asking whether we focus on Lincoln at the expense of others who played important roles in achieving the Emancipation Proclamation.

A LONG WAY FROM THERE TO HERE

BackStory producer Eric Mennel talks with writer and editor Ta-Nehisi Coates of The Atlantic about the legacy of emancipation for African-Americans today.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Three former slaves, recorded by the WPA in the 1930s, describe their experiences of emancipation.

INDIVIDUAL SHOW SEGMENTS

The following segments touch on stories and themes relevant to Black History Month and are arranged in reverse chronological order. These first few segments exploring stories in the 1960s may be particularly relevant for this year's Black History Month theme, which uses the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act as a springboard to exploring Civil Rights in American history.

From **Conventional Wisdom: A History of American Political Conventions**

PLEASE (DON'T) BE SEATED

BackStory producer Allison Quantz tells the story of an unofficial, integrated delegation from Mississippi that attempted to claim seats at the 1964 Democratic National Convention and were denied. Their aim was to protest the ways in which African-Americans were kept from being a part of the official delegation. Quantz speaks with members of that unofficial delegation – Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton and Dr. Leslie McLemore – and the History Guys then discuss other groups that have used conventions to gain legitimacy in the eyes of insiders.

From **Home Bittersweet Home: Owning the American Dream**

WELCOME TO THE BIG LEAGUES

Brian unpacks the saga of the Contract Buyers League, a local activist group in Chicago's Lawndale neighborhood that organized in the 1960s to protest unreasonable contract payments for their houses.

From **States of Mind: Mental Illness in America**

THE SCHIZOPHRENIC SIXTIES

Sociologist Jonathan Metzl talks with Brian about the rise of black protest in the 1960s and 70s, and how it was increasingly redefined in psychiatric terms.

From **Turf War: A History of College Sports**

RUNNING BACK

BackStory producer Eric Mennel joins the History Guys to share the story of Andrew Pernel, one of the first African-American players on University of Alabama's football team.

From **Rinse and Repeat: Cleanliness in America**

UNCLEAN HANDS

Charletta Sudduth talks with the guys about the contradictory ways cleanliness was understood in the Jim Crow South.

From **Been There, Done That: Historical Reenactments**

GEORGIA ON OUR MIND

Contributor Jacqueline Olive tells the story of a group of people who get together each year to reenact the notorious 1946 Moore's Ford lynching in Georgia.

From **Beyond Numbers: A History of the U.S. Census**

MINORITIES AND THE CENSUS

The guys discuss the use of racial categories in the US Census.

From **American Exodus: A History of Emigration**

BRAVE NEW WORLD

Brian talks with Yelena Khanga, whose grandparents moved to the Soviet Union in the 1930s. They were part of a mini-migration of 16 African-American families who looked to Communist Uzbekistan for a chance to build a new world.

HARLEM IN MONTMARTRE

BackStory producer Chioke l'Anson tells the story of Eugene Bullard, the first African-American fighter pilot in World War I – only he flew for France. Escaping Southern segregation as a teenager, Bullard found his American dream on the other side of the Atlantic.

From **Committed: Marriage in America**

IN THE EYES OF THE LAW

Ed chats with historian Liz Regosin about what marriage meant to freedpeople who had been unable to legally marry under slavery – and why their marriages were of such interest to Northern white reformers. Then Peter, Ed, and Brian riff on federal intervention in our intimate affairs.

From **Here to There: A History of Mapping**

A PICTURE TELLS A THOUSAND WORDS

Peter looks at the famous Francis Bicknell Carpenter painting, “First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln,” and reveals the story behind the map featured in the lower right-hand corner.

From **Real to Reel: History at the Movies**

HISTORY GUYS UNCHAINED

The guys discuss which is a more useful film: *Lincoln* or *Django Unchained*.

From **Civil War 150th: Why They Fought**

FIGHTING FOR LIBERATION

The Guys discuss the important moral and tactical contributions of African-American soldiers in the Union Army.

From **Contagion: Responding to Infectious Disease**

NOT SO SAFE SPACE

Ed speaks with historian Jim Downs about how disease devastated populations of escaped slaves in contraband camps behind Union lines during and after the Civil War.

From **Been There, Done That: Historical Reenactments**

TELLING THE UNTOLD STORY

The American History Guys speak with Marvin Greer about why he spends his weekends playing the part of a slave at Civil War reenactments.

From **Here to There: A History of Mapping**

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY

Ed chats with historian Susan Schulten about the map that used U.S. Census data to illustrate the distribution of slave populations prior to the Civil War.

From **Independence Daze: A History of July Fourth**

WEB EXTRA: WHAT TO THE SLAVE IS THE FOURTH OF JULY?

David Blight narrates a reenactment of Frederick Douglass’ 1852 speech, “The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro,” widely known as one of the greatest Abolitionist speeches ever. In it, Douglass highlights the hypocrisy of celebrating liberty in a nation that allows slavery.

From **Been There, Done That: Historical Reenactments**

TO REENACT OR NOT TO REENACT?

Brian talks with Vince Vaise from Hampton National Historic Site about “Slave for a Day,” a proposed living history event at Hampton Plantation that, when announced, caused a controversy.

From **American Exodus: A History of Emigration**

LITTLE AMERICA

Brian and Peter tell the story of the founding of Liberia. Free American blacks set off for the West African coast, motivated by American ideals of freedom and opportunity — but they also carried pernicious ideas about racial hierarchy.

From **The Beasts Within: Domesticated Animals in America**

LEARNING TO OWN

Historian Sarah Hand Meacham describes the pet of choice in the 18th Century Chesapeake – the squirrel – and how owning pets prepared white children for adult roles, as absolute masters in the South’s slave society.

WEB EXTRA: WHAT THE SLAVE OWNS

Sarah Hand Meacham discusses concepts of pet ownership within an 18th Century slave community that was itself owned.

Got questions for us? Ideas about other playlists we should put together? Are you a teacher with stories to share or recommendations about using BackStory in the classroom? Send us a note to backstory@virginia.edu - we’d love to hear from you!