

Black or African American Culture

THIS DOCUMENT OUTLINES SOME OF THE VALUES AND TRAITS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE.

NOTE: THESE ARE CULTURAL PATTERNS THAT MAY NOT APPLY TO ALL INDIVIDUALS. CULTURAL TRAITS EXIST ON A SPECTRUM AND VARY BASED ON REGION, SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND, PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, & MORE.

CULTURAL TRAITS REPRESENT PATTERNS AND TENDENCIES RATHER THAN ABSOLUTE RULES. THEY HELP US UNDERSTAND COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING INDIVIDUAL VARIATIONS WITHIN EACH GROUP. BY RECOGNIZING THESE NUANCES, WE CAN APPRECIATE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES WITHOUT FALLING INTO OVERSIMPLIFICATION OR STEREOTYPING!

Values	Family	Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended family networks and kinship bonds Resilience - Ability to overcome adversity and maintain strength through challenges Respect for elders - Honoring and learning from older generations. Older women are highly valued. Education - Viewed as a path to advancement and empowerment Collective success - Achievement is seen as uplifting the entire community Spirituality - Faith and religious beliefs play a central role in daily life Creativity and expression - Artistic and cultural expression is highly valued Dancing Interdependence Emphasis on “being real.” The more open an individual is about their emotions, mood, & feelings, the more authentic and trusted. 	<p>The family unit extends beyond the nuclear family to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended family networks that include grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and close family friends Multi-generational households are common Strong maternal influence and leadership within families. Grandmother is “heart of family.” Shared responsibility in child-rearing among family members and community Flexible family roles where members step in as needed <p>Children are taught to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect and care for elders Value family history and oral traditions Understand their role in the larger family network Contribute to family well-being from an early age 	<p>Traditional American English & use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressive and animated speech patterns Call-and-response interactions Non-verbal cues and gestures Storytelling and oral traditions <p>Importance is placed on expressing strong emotions—individuals are free to verbalize and express what they're feeling. People often use hand gestures and facial expressions to convey both what they feel and how intensely they feel it. Those present are expected to listen and validate these emotions.</p>
Food	Religion and Spirituality	American Heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soul Food - Traditional dishes that emerged from African American culinary heritage Spices and bold flavors Fast food and convenience meals 	<p>Protestant Christian influence due to historical factors during slavery and due to the dominance of White American culture.</p> <p>Spirituality plays a central role in Black culture.</p> <p>While Christianity is predominant, there is significant representation in Islam, particularly through the Nation of Islam's historical influence, and growing diversity in spiritual practices including African traditional religions.</p> <p>Religious Expression:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong emphasis on gospel music and passionate worship styles The church as a gathering place for community events and social support Use of call-and-response in services and prayers Important role of ministers and religious leaders in community guidance 	<p>Black/African American heritage is expressed and visualized through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The legacy of slavery and the subsequent fight for civil rights and equality A history of resilience and resistance against systemic oppression <p>Important historical figures in African American heritage include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and more.
Fashion	Hair	Hair cont.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fashion as an expression of resistance and pride, celebrating Black identity and beauty Bold colors, patterns, and creative combinations in clothing and accessories Strong emphasis on personal style and individual expression Pioneering streetwear innovations that shape global fashion trends Integration of traditional elements like head wraps and African-inspired prints into contemporary styles Emphasis on embracing fuller body types 	<p>Given hair type & textures and history of discrimination, hair care and styling holds special cultural significance in Black communities. Some aspects & traits for hair include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Braids, cornrows, locs, twists, and natural styles that celebrate textured hair for men and women Hair care as a cultural practice, often involving shared knowledge passed down through generations for men and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protective styling techniques that maintain hair health while expressing creativity and identity Natural hair movement emphasizing pride in authentic hair textures and rejection of European beauty standards Hair styling as a social activity & community builder