

Cultural background summary



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My cultural background is that of African American, with practicing religion that of a Christian. I belong to the middle having usual comforts and sufficient food to eat. My schooling was in the neighborhood school with mixed racial children though predominantly of African American descent. My cultural background is influenced by history of our people, the church and the mainstream American culture beamed into all households daily through T. V., and radio to a lesser extent.

The now well researched history of slave trade of my early ancestors in America and their societal isolation helped preserve many practices and traditions which they had brought with them from Africa passing orally from generation to generation in the form of stories, songs, music and dance. Our dance movements can be easily traced to many tribes of sub-Saharan, Sahelean Africa and western dance form. Similarly our music and songs are an amalgamation of African and European styles giving rise to unique styles like jazz, swing, blues and ragtime. When these evolved they were restricted to African Americans only but have become popular the world over. Similarly our folktales were a clever way of preserving the cultural traditions of the past conveyed through the convenience of riveting stories whose magic enthralled not just through words but also the expression and tone of the story teller. Modern day rap songs are an extension of the same.

The dialect and distinct accent has also been shaped in the historical melting pot in which English and often unknown various African regional languages were thrown in. We are able to manage the Standard English at school and our unique dialect at home with equal ease.

Though we know that our ancestors were forcibly converted, we are practicing Christians and regularly go to the church in the best possible

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dresses. The women especially like to wear elaborate caps for worship and our gospel songs also display unique African American flavor.

Culturally the preference is for brightly colored attire as is the case with many western Africans, though mainstream clothes (fabric and patterns) do influence the dress sense and appearance. The hairstyles most common ones being dread locks and braids are distinctly African and very convenient given the kind of tightly coiled hair of ours.

My own cultural identity is also shaped as above but I think that the mainstream cultural influence has also found its way into my personality. This is because of the influence of T. V. and my non friends of European descent. My food habits are somewhat simpler than those of my parents and grand parents who are used to fat laden traditional food of fried chicken, collared beans, candied yam, cheese and macaroni. My language is also more refined than those of earlier generations and the choice of music and dance is more cosmopolitan though I do prefer rap, and hip hop and am not ashamed about it. My white friends also share the same interests as me so I feel that my assimilation in the mainstream American culture is much more than those of my ancestors.