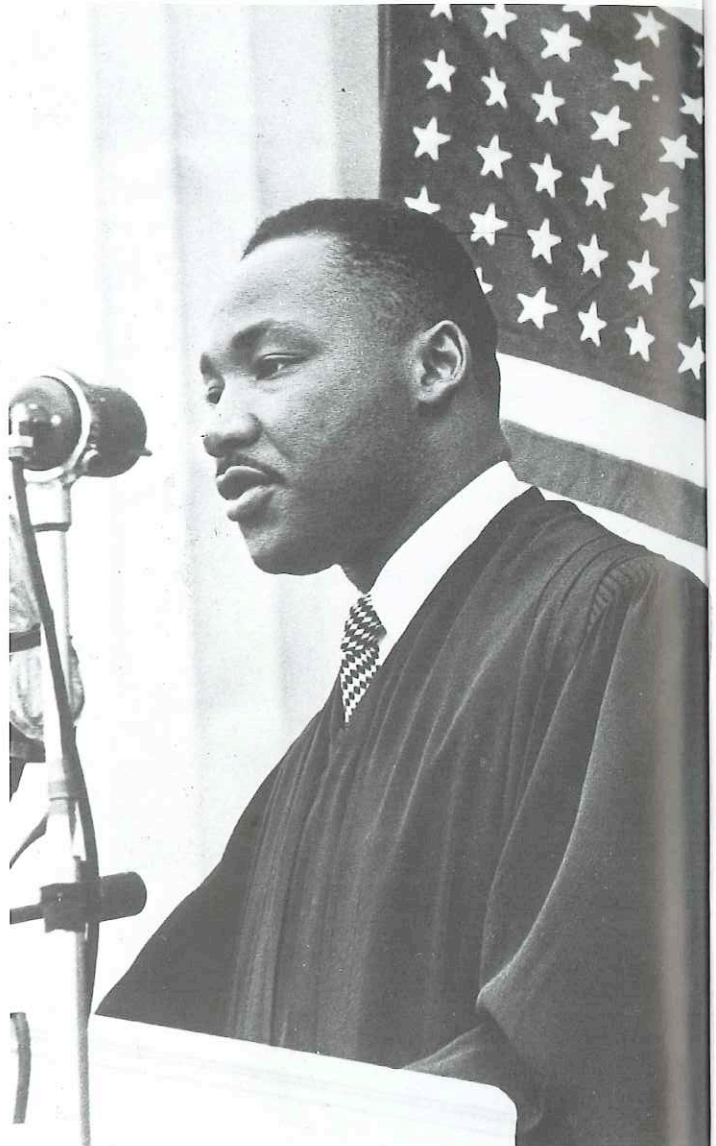


Black America

The ancestors of most African-Americans were brought by force. England, France, Spain, Portugal, and even Denmark had colonies or trading posts in Africa. Europeans captured or bought slaves from Arab traders or from local chieftains who sold enemies they had caught. Many of the slaves died on the way to America. After they were sold, they worked on tobacco, sugar, wheat, rice, and cotton plantations or as servants in houses. Their children were also slaves.

Gradually, slavery disappeared from the North, and there were many free blacks in America – even in the Southern states. But slavery continued in the South until the end of the Civil War. After the war, there were attempts to guarantee the rights of blacks. There were even black politicians in Congress. But Southern whites would not accept blacks as equals. Some whites formed a secret organization called the Ku Klux Klan to terrorize blacks demanding their rights. By 1900, every Southern state had passed laws limiting the right of blacks to vote. Blacks were not even allowed to use the same schools, restaurants, parks, or drinking fountains



Martin Luther King.

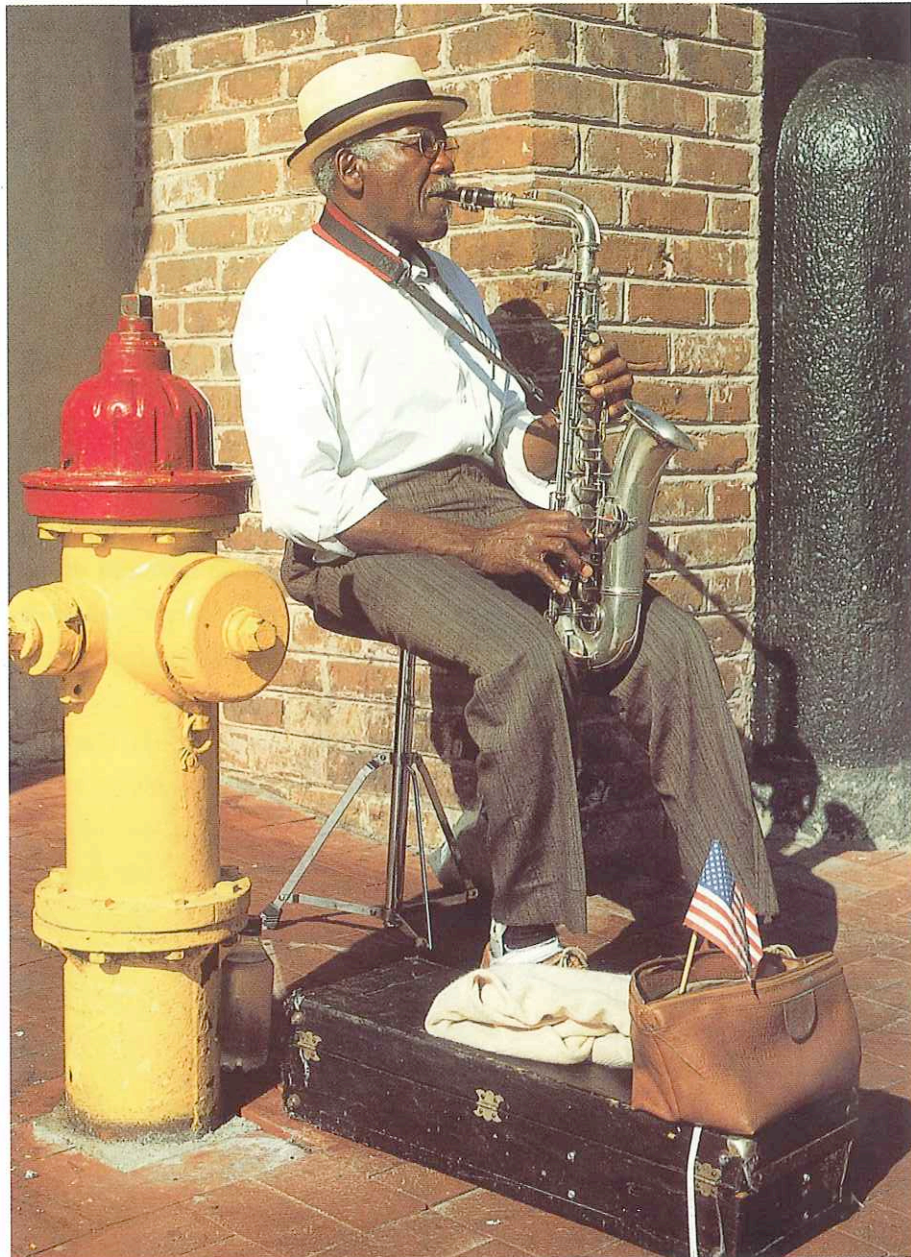
as whites. They had to sit in the back of public buses and use special black sections on trains. Schools in America were also segregated. There were separate schools for blacks and whites. This situation continued for nearly a hundred years.

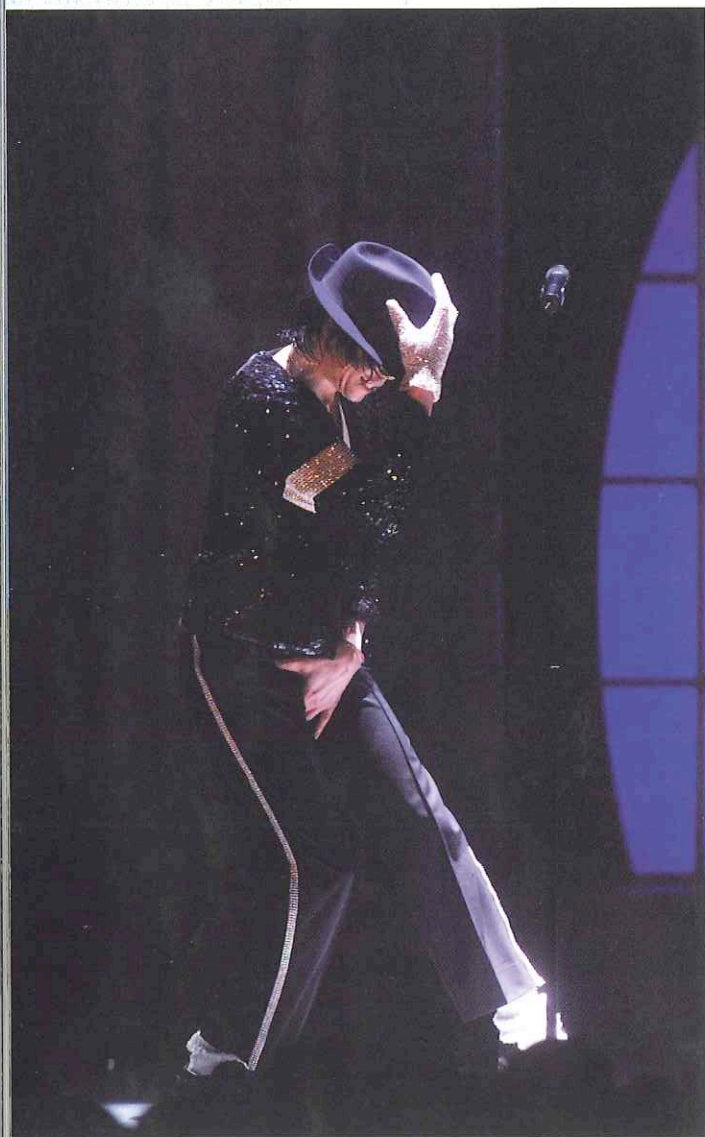
During the 1960s, more and more blacks demanded the right to vote and be treated the same way as whites. The most famous black leader, Martin Luther King, insisted that protests be non-violent. Martin

Luther King said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by their character..." – tragically, King was shot in 1968.

Laws and the Constitution were changed to make sure that all American citizens have the right to vote. School districts were changed so that schools

would have a mixture of races. Sometimes towns resorted to "busing." Children were driven in school buses from one neighborhood to another in order to get a better racial mixture. Unfortunately, this did not always work. Parents removed their children from public schools and sent them to private ones instead. Other parents simply moved to towns and cities that were overwhelmingly white.





Michael Jackson.

Many black people would say that Martin Luther King's dream has not yet come true. Blacks, or African-Americans, make up America's largest minority. 30 million Americans trace their ancestry to Africa. Blacks have been part of America's history since the 17th century, but even today, blacks are not completely accepted by everyone in American society. However, things seem to be getting better.

In the 1960s, less than 5% of all blacks belonged to the middleclass. Nowadays, 40% are middleclass. Blacks are active in all aspects of American society from the sciences to politics. In 1967, Thurgood Marshall became the first black on the Supreme Court, and Toni Morrison received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993. But 33% of all blacks are still poor. Many of them live in ghettos. Blacks feel frustrated that progress has taken so long. This frustration was seen in Los Angeles in 1992 when violent riots resulted in the deaths of 53 people and over \$1 billion in wrecked property because a Los Angeles court would not convict four white police officers that had beaten a black man, Rodney King.

Nevertheless, black culture is an important part of US culture. Music, entertainment and sports are important areas where blacks have had great success and have gained acceptance in American society. Black movie stars like Whoopi Goldberg, Eddie Murphy, Bill Cosby, Denzel Washington, and filmmaker Spike Lee are world famous. Jazz started out as a mixture of African rhythms and American and European music. Rap music and hip-hop culture show how dynamic even ghetto life and culture can be. Tina Turner is famous as a rhythm and blues singer. Michael Jackson's album *Thriller* has sold more than 50 million copies – a world record.