

African-American Biographies



*This list includes only a few of many African-American writers. Check the San Leandro Public Library's online catalog or ask a librarian for further information on the subject. To discover more about African American writers, please visit "African-American Writers: a Celebration" at www.mtsu.edu/~vvesper/afam.htm. ** Please note: some of these authors write about African American characters but are not African American.*

Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem. Black Profiles in Courage: a legacy of African American achievement. 973.0496 ABDUL-JABBAR. To provide role models for African Americans, retired basketball star Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Alan Steinberg have crafted interesting and nuanced accounts of eleven heroic African Americans whose accomplishments changed U.S. history, including little-known explorer Estevanico, as well as well-known freedom fighters Frederick Douglass and Rosa Parks.

Ashe, Arthur. Days of Grace. BIOG ASHE ASH. Arthur Ashe, born in the segregated South, developed into one of his generation's greatest players. When infected with the AIDS virus during a bypass operation, he transferred the brilliance and power that made him a great tennis champion to the championship of great causes: justice for black men and women, the fight against prejudice, and the fight against AIDS.

Beals, Melba. Warriors Don't Cry. 370.193 WARRIORS. One of the nine African American students who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, AR, in 1957, Melba Beals tells an incredible story of faith, family love, friendships, and strong personal commitment.

Brown, Cecil. Coming Up Down Home. BIOG BROWN BRO. Brown tells of his struggles to escape the violence plaguing his family and succeed despite the odds and low expectations for people of color.

Cleaver, Eldridge. Soul on Ice. STORAGE 301.451 CLEAVER. In the now-classic memoir that shocked, outraged, and ultimately changed the way America looked at the civil rights movement and the black experience, Black Panther activist Eldridge Cleaver writes, "I'm perfectly aware that I'm in prison, that I'm a Negro, that I've been a rapist, and that I have a Higher Uneducation."

Evanzz, Karl. The Messenger: the Rise & Fall of Elijah Muhammad. BIOG ELIJAH EVANZZ. A biography that relates the life of Georgia-born mulatto preacher and laborman Elijah Poole who reinvented himself as the leader of the controversial Nation of Islam and became one of the most controversial Americans of the twentieth century.

Gaines, Patricia. Laughing in the Dark. BIOG GAINES GAI. Gaines's memoir of empowerment tells the story of how she went from a young mother jailed on drug charges to a successful reporter for the Washington Post.

Gates, Henry Louis. The African American Century: how black Americans have shaped our country. 920 GATES. Two of the most prominent black scholars and social commentators in America focus on 100 men and women (10 per decade) who represent important moments in the struggle to deepen America's democratic roots against the overwhelming forces of racism and bigotry, as well as demonstrate the multifaceted and profound achievements of African Americans in diverse fields.

Giovanni, Nikki. Racism 101. BIOG GIOVANNI GIO. Bestselling poet Giovanni writes about various aspects of American life as she has encountered them in the past few years in over two dozen short essays, personal and political, on topics ranging from Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* to matters of family and friends.

Golden, Marita. Don't Play in the Sun: one woman's journey through the color complex. 305.488 GOLDEN. Painting an intimate self-portrait of life as a dark-complexioned black woman, Golden shares her personal journey to an appreciation of her looks despite color-based discrimination that began when she was warned not to play in the sun.

Hawkins, Walter L. African American Biographies: profiles of 558 current men and women. 920.0092 HAWKINS. One-page biographies provide fairly detailed, career-oriented summaries, some accompanied by a photograph. Criteria for inclusion include career accomplishments, being the first African American in the field or profession (civil rights, sciences, sports, government, business, military, etc.), individual awards (Hall of Fame, Olympic Medal, etc.), and overall leadership.



Hooks, Bell. Bone Black: memories of girlhood. BIO HOOKS HOO.

Feminist intellectual bell hooks presents a powerfully intimate account of growing up in the South to show the unfolding of female creativity and one strong-spirited child's journey toward becoming a writer.



Johnson, James. Beyond Defeat. BIOG JOHNSON JOH.

Dr. Johnson relates his triumph over childhood poverty, racial injustice, and intolerance, while rising to the rank of Warrent Officer in the United States Marine Corps, serving on Gov. Reagan's cabinet in California, and eventually serving high-ranking positions within the Nixon administration.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. and Carson Clayborne. The autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. BIOG KING KIN.

Using an unprecedented amount of archival material, including previously unpublished writings, interviews, recordings, and correspondence, noted author Clayborne Carson has constructed a remarkable first-person account of Dr. King's extraordinary life.

_____ King, Martin Luther, Jr. The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. 323.092 KING.

This extensive work includes MLK's letters from his youth and childhood.

Lewis, Reginald. Why should White Guys have all the Fun?. BIOG LEWIS LEW.

Based on Lewis' unfinished autobiography, journalist Blair Walker completes a vivid portrait of the wealthiest African American man in history and one of the most successful entrepreneurs of all time.

Malcolm X. The Autobiography of Malcolm X. BIOG MALCOLM X MAL.

Malcolm X recounts his transformation from a bitter, self-destructive petty criminal into an articulate political activist, the continued relevance of his militant analysis of white racism, and his emphasis on self-respect and self-help for African Americans.

_____ ... Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements. BIOG MALCOLM X.

A collection of Malcolm X's major speeches made during the last eight months of his life.

Marsalis, Wynton. Sweet Swing Blues on the Road. BIOG MARSALIS MAR.

Popular jazz musician and composer Marsalis details his travels around the world with his band, giving his views on the trumpet, romance, and the role of the artist in American society.

McCall, Nathan. Makes Me Wanna Holler: a young black man in America. BIOG MCCALL MCC.

Examining the complexities of the problems of black youths from an insider's perspective, African-American journalist Nathan McCall recalls his own troubled childhood, his rehabilitation while in prison, and his successful Washington Post career.

Powell, Colin. My American Journey. BIOG POWELL POW.

The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff recalls his youth in the South Bronx, his military service in Germany and Korea, his experiences with discrimination, his tours in Vietnam, and his rise to the heights of America's political and military elite.

Robinson, Randall. Quitting America: the departure of a black man from his native land. BIOG ROBINSON ROB.

Founder of the humanitarian group TransAfrica, Robinson has been eloquently angry in his calls for America to recognize the depredations suffered by the descendants of slaves. Now, having left for a new life in the Caribbean, Robinson expounds on his belief that America has lost its grip on democracy and has become too comfortable living beneath its potential and ideals.

Taulbert, Clifton L. Once upon a Time when We were Colored. 976.242 TAULBERT.

Describing a close, nurturing family in a small Mississippi town during the late 1940s and early 1950s, Taulbert writes of people who believed in hard work and had a strong sense of family pride and affection during a time of discrimination.

... Autobiography of a People: three centuries of African American history told by those who lived it. 973 AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

More than 100 excerpts from three centuries -- from slave narratives, diaries, poems, and letters in the first half of the nation's life to autobiographies, memoirs, letters, and speeches from the twentieth century create a compelling portrait of how African Americans have survived -- and shaped -- some of the most important events in United States history.

... Bearing Witness: selections from African-American autobiography in the twentieth century. 920 BEARING.

This edition includes selections about the lives of well-known African Americans including Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Wright, Langson Hughes, J. Saunders Redding, Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, Marita Golden, Alice Walker, and others.



... Black Leaders of the 20th century. 920.0092 BLACK.
Biographical studies on the major achievements of fifteen twentieth-century African-American leaders includes men and women who came from diverse walks of life including religion, labor, business, the professions, and the arts.

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