

Black History Month – Cultural Toolkit

A neutral, inclusive, and legally safe "Meeting in a Box" for organizations

FAIR360



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Meeting in a Box

The logo for FAIR360, featuring the text "FAIR360" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The "0" is stylized with a small blue square at its top right corner. The logo is set against a light purple rectangular background.

**A neutral, inclusive, and
legally safe Cultural Toolkit**

**Designed for corporate
leaders, managers, HR
leaders, ERG members,
communications
professionals, and C-suite
executives**

**Intended for education,
discussion, and reflection**

Purpose

This Cultural Toolkit is designed to support **corporate leaders, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion practitioners, managers, HR leaders, ERG members, communications professionals, and C-suite executives** in facilitating thoughtful, inclusive conversations during Black History Month.

The intent is to:

- Inform through **historical context and facts**
- Inspire through **shared contributions and collaboration**
- Encourage **constructive dialogue** aligned with organizational values
- Reinforce **belonging, respect, and shared progress** across all cultures

This toolkit is **inclusive of all races and cultures**, focuses on education rather than advocacy, and is structured to be **legally safe, neutral in tone, and appropriate for corporate settings**.



How to Use This Toolkit

Flexible Format

- Can be delivered as **one 60–90 minute session** or
- Broken into **four weekly segments (30–45 minutes each)**
- Facilitators may adapt language to fit internal culture
- Participation should be **voluntary, respectful, and discussion-based**

Ground Rules (Recommended)

- Participation is optional; listening is valued
- Speak from personal experience; avoid assumptions
- Focus on learning, not debating
- Respect differing perspectives

Weekly Segment Structure

4-Part Series

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Understanding Black History Month in a Shared Context

Objective

Provide historical grounding while reinforcing that Black history is part of broader human and American history.

Key Talking Points

- Black History Month originated as a way to ensure contributions that were historically overlooked were recognized
- It is not separate from national or global history, but interwoven with it
- Learning history helps organizations better understand present-day workplaces and communities

Facts & Figures (Neutral & Educational)

- Black History Month originated in 1926 as *Negro History Week*, founded by historian Carter G. Woodson, and was recognized nationally as Black History Month in 1976
- Black Americans have contributed across **every major sector**, including business, science, medicine, education, government, technology, infrastructure, arts, sports, and the military
- Historical economic data shows Black labor played a foundational role in U.S. agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, construction, and public service
- Black entrepreneurship has existed since the 18th century, including early mutual aid societies, banks, insurance companies, newspapers, and small businesses serving diverse communities
- Many Black innovators and leaders advanced progress within **multiracial teams, institutions, and partnerships**, reflecting shared effort rather than isolated achievement
- Cultural contributions originating in Black communities—such as music genres, culinary traditions, language, and fashion—have influenced global culture and multi-industry markets

Inclusive Lens: Shared Contributions

Black history reflects sustained **cross-cultural collaboration**, mutual influence, and shared progress. The examples below illustrate how Black/African-American and non-Black individuals from many backgrounds contributed together across disciplines:

Science & Medicine: • In the mid-20th century, Dr. Charles Drew (African American) advanced large-scale blood banking systems while working within integrated medical and military research institutions; these systems were adopted nationally and globally • Dr. David Satcher (African American) later collaborated with multidisciplinary public health teams as U.S. Surgeon General in the 1990s, improving health outcomes across populations	Business & Industry: • Madam C.J. Walker (African American) built one of the first nationally known beauty enterprises in the early 1900s by employing a diverse workforce and distribution network across the U.S. • Throughout the 20th century, Black-owned businesses partnered with White, Latino, and immigrant-owned suppliers, distributors, and financial institutions to grow local and regional economies	Education & Knowledge Institutions: • W.E.B. Du Bois (African American) conducted early sociological research in the late 19th and early 20th centuries within predominantly White academic institutions, shaping modern social science • Integrated universities and professional associations enabled scholars of many races to collaborate on research, curriculum development, and leadership training	Labor & Workforce Development: Multiracial labor coalitions in the 1930s–1960s, including Black, White, Latino, and immigrant workers, helped establish workplace protections such as collective bargaining, minimum wage standards, and safety regulations
Arts, Media & Culture: • Jazz and blues, developed by Black musicians in the early 20th century, evolved through collaboration with musicians of many backgrounds, influencing global music industries • Film, television, and advertising industries increasingly reflected cross-cultural creative teams shaping shared narratives and markets	Public Service & Military: • During World War II and subsequent conflicts, Black service members served alongside White, Asian, Latino, and Indigenous colleagues, contributing to integrated military operations and leadership development • In government and civil service, policymakers and administrators from diverse backgrounds collaborated on legislation, infrastructure, and public programs		

These examples reinforce that Black history is not separate from broader history—it is deeply connected to **shared institutions, collective effort, and cross-cultural collaboration**.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is historical visibility important in a workplace setting?
- How does understanding shared history support inclusion for everyone?
- What role can organizations play in education without being political?

Black Contributions to American History

Economic, Educational, and Workforce Impact (By the Numbers)

Economic Contributions

- Black Americans represent approximately 13–14% of the U.S. population and contribute an estimated \$1.6–\$2.0 trillion annually in consumer spending power
- There are over 3 million Black-owned businesses in the U.S., generating hundreds of billions of dollars in annual revenue and supporting millions of jobs
- Black labor has historically been essential to U.S. agriculture, manufacturing, construction, transportation, healthcare, education, and public service sectors

Education & Human Capital Growth

- The number of Black Americans with college degrees has increased more than fourfold since the 1960s
- Today, over 7 million Black Americans hold a bachelor's degree or higher, contributing across professional and leadership roles
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) represent about 3% of U.S. colleges but produce nearly 20% of Black graduates nationwide

Workforce, Innovation, and Cultural Impact

- Black Americans are represented across every major occupation group, including STEM, healthcare, education, government, and the skilled trades
- Black innovation has contributed to advancements in medicine, engineering, transportation, communications, and technology used globally today
- Cultural contributions originating in Black communities drive multibillion-dollar global industries including music, sports, fashion, film, and digital media

Contributions Across Cultures – Collaboration and Collective Progress

Objective

Highlight how people from many races and cultures have contributed to Black history and how Black leaders have contributed to shared progress.

Key Themes

- Innovation happens across cultures
- Progress is rarely achieved in isolation
- Collaboration strengthens outcomes



Examples of Cross-Cultural Contributions

(Use examples relevant to your industry or audience)



Business & Labor:

Multiracial labor movements improved workplace safety and wages



Science & Medicine:

Diverse research teams advanced public health outcomes benefiting all communities



Arts & Culture:

Black music, literature, and art were shaped by and influenced global cultures



Civil Society:

Policy and social progress often involved multiracial advocacy and leadership

Discussion Prompts

- How does collaboration across cultures show up in our organization today?
- What conditions help diverse teams succeed?
- How can leaders recognize shared contributions without minimizing individual experiences?

The Modern Workplace – Opportunity, Access, and Belonging

Objective

Connect historical context to today's workplace realities in a constructive, non-accusatory way.

Key Talking Points

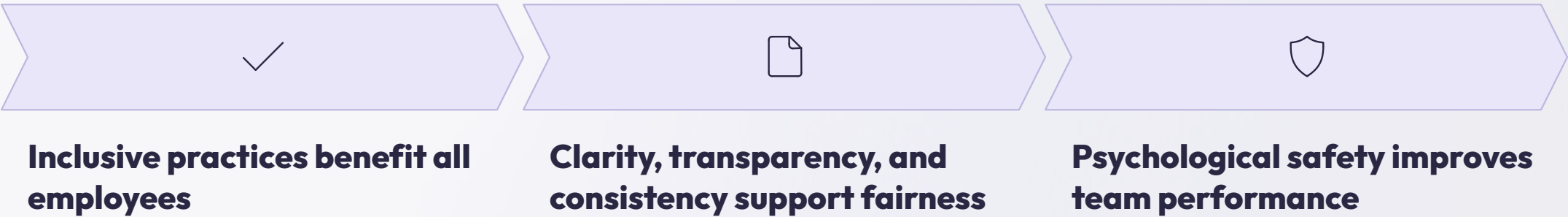
- Workforce diversity has increased, but experiences still vary
- Inclusion focuses on **access, fairness, and belonging** for all employees
- Data helps organizations understand trends without assigning blame

Sample Data Themes (Customize with Company Data Where Possible)

- Representation by level or function
- Retention and engagement trends
- Leadership pipelines

(Avoid singling out any group as responsible; focus on systems and opportunities.)

Inclusive Framing



Discussion Prompts

- What does belonging look like across different roles and teams?
- Where do systems support inclusion well today?
- What improvements would benefit everyone?

Moving Forward Together – Leadership, Culture, and Shared Responsibility

Objective

Shift from reflection to forward-looking leadership behaviors.

Key Talking Points

- Culture is shaped by everyday actions
- Leaders influence inclusion through consistency and fairness
- Progress is ongoing and shared

Practical Actions (Legally Safe & Inclusive)

- Encourage mentorship and sponsorship across teams
- Support transparent career development processes
- Recognize contributions broadly and equitably
- Foster open dialogue while respecting differing views



Reflection Questions

- What is one insight you are taking away?
- How can leaders model inclusive behaviors consistently?
- How can teams continue learning beyond Black History Month?

Facilitator Tips (Important)

Avoid asking participants to speak for any group

Do not require personal disclosure

Redirect debate toward learning and curiosity

Emphasize that participation does not imply agreement

Optional Add-Ons

- Internal spotlight on collaborative achievements
- Curated reading or learning resources
- ERG-led optional listening sessions
- Leadership reflection messages

Closing Message

Black History Month is an opportunity to learn, reflect, and recognize shared progress.

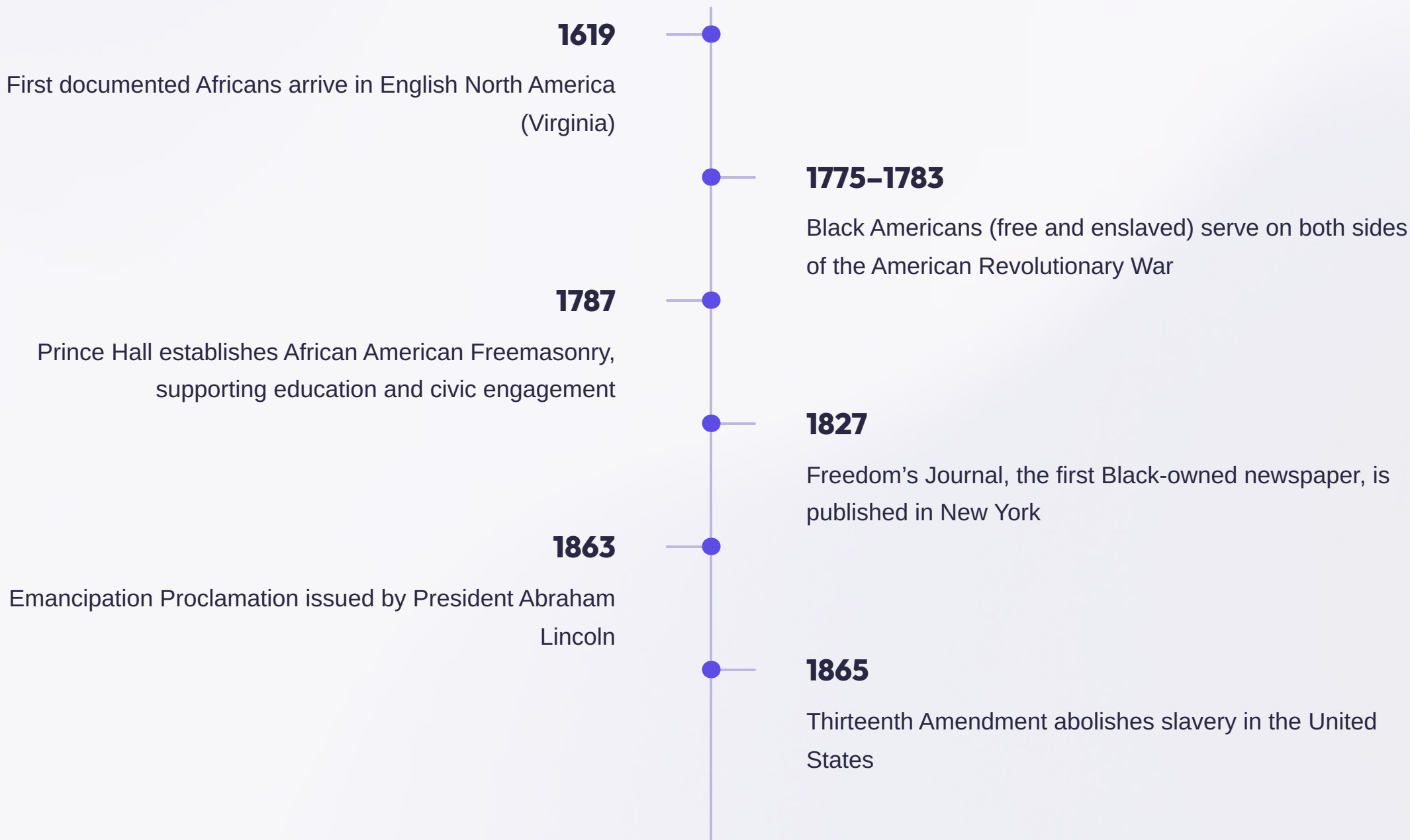
Understanding history helps organizations build workplaces where **everyone can contribute, grow, and belong.**

This toolkit is designed for educational purposes and supports inclusive workplace dialogue across all cultures.

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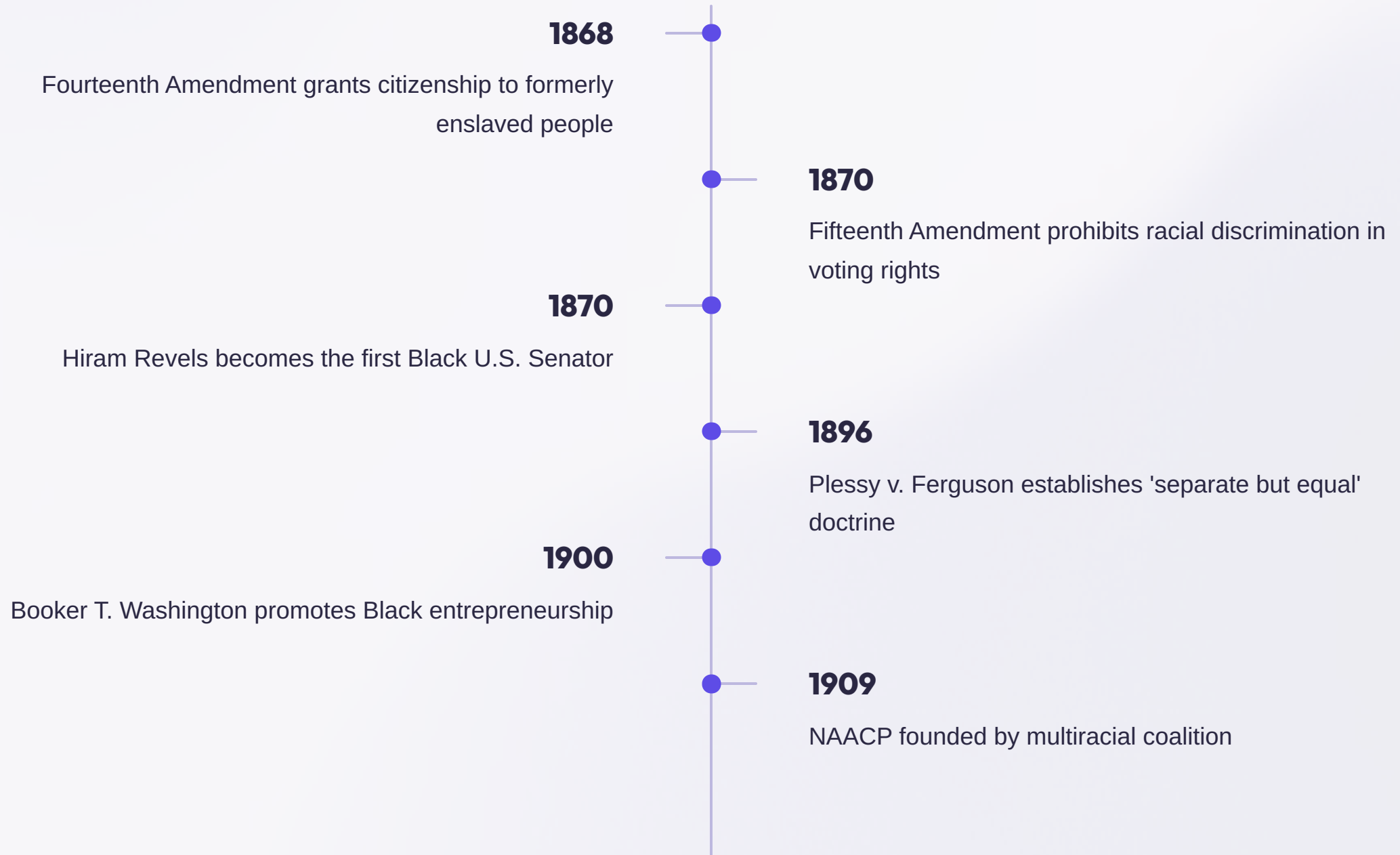
Black History Timeline

Explore key moments in African American history from the 17th to the 19th century, highlighting foundational events and milestones.



Reconstruction & Early 1900s

A pivotal period of legal transformation, civil rights struggles, and the rise of new institutions following the Civil War.



Cultural Renaissance & War Era

A period marked by a flourishing of Black arts and culture, alongside critical advancements in civil rights and integration efforts during a time of global conflict.



Civil Rights Movement (1950s-1960s)

A transformative era marked by organized efforts to end racial discrimination and secure equal rights for African Americans, leading to landmark legislation and social change.



Modern Era & Contemporary Progress (1970s-Present)

This period showcases continued strides in political representation, civil rights recognition, and societal impact, building on foundational struggles.

