

Day 2 — The Slave Trade and the Influence of the African Diaspora

More than 10 million people were enslaved in Africa and brought to North America, South America, and the Caribbean between 1500 and 1888, when slavery was finally abolished in Brazil (the last country in the Americas to outlaw the practice). A diaspora is a group of people that has been displaced outside its traditional homeland, especially involuntarily, as was the case during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The African diaspora in the Americas stretches from Canada in the north down to Argentina in the south. All but a few of the 47 countries and dependent territories of the Americas were influenced by the slave trade, and as a result, those countries today show varying degrees of African musical influence.

The best-known example, because of the global impact of its popular culture, is the United States. Few people in the world have not heard the uniquely American musics fundamentally shaped by African-Americans—namely, blues, jazz, gospel, rock, soul, funk, and hip-hop.

In contrast, there are many countries in the Western Hemisphere with smaller and less-known populations of African descent. Several of these countries are home to African-related musical traditions that have achieved much less international recognition. Examples of this are Mexico and the Central American countries, which have produced such creolized African-influenced genres as son jarocho (Mexico), punta rock (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua), and cumbia (which started in Panama and northern Colombia, but has since spread across much of Latin America). Similarly, in South America, several countries with African-descended minorities have produced their own African-influenced genres that are relatively unknown elsewhere, such as saya (Bolivia), currulao (Ecuador and Colombia), bambuco (Colombia), gaita (Venezuela), música criolla (Peru), and candombe (Uruguay).

Even the world-famous tango—a music and dance genre identified with Argentina (and to a lesser extent, Uruguay)—was born partly from African influences, some of which arrived directly from Africa and others via other countries (such as Cuba). These African roots of tango (and certain related older styles, such as milonga) have yet to be acknowledged on a broad scale, partly because of Argentina's traditional denial of its black population.

Brazil—the other giant of the Western Hemisphere, with the United States—has the largest population of African descendants in the world outside of Africa. Brazil is rich in African-influenced musical genres, some of which are strictly local or regional and little known outside their home territories, others of which have had a global impact. Perhaps the best-known Brazilian music with clear African (largely Congo-Angolan) roots is samba, which exists in many different regional varieties, the most famous of which is closely associated with the massive Carnival of Rio de Janeiro. But a full view of African-related music in Brazil would include dozens, if not hundreds, of genres and would fill many volumes.

Aside from Brazil, the region in the Western Hemisphere with the richest and most varied assortment of African-derived and African-influenced musical traditions is the Caribbean, to which the greater part of this course will be devoted, with a special focus on Cuba and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

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KEY TAKEAWAY POINTS

- African culture survived the ordeal of slavery to become a powerful shaping force. (This is worth repeating.)
- The more than 10 million displaced slaves of the African diaspora stretched across most of the countries of the Caribbean and Americas, from Canada to Argentina.
- The African diaspora impacted both the musical traditions of these countries and their broader cultural outreach in varying degrees.
- In many countries of the Western Hemisphere there are numerous musical genres with Africa influence that are not particularly popular beyond the immediate country of origin.
- In some cases such as those listed below, however, the influence of particular regional musical genres reached global proportions.

The American genres of blues, jazz, gospel, rock, soul, funk, and hip-hop

The tango of Argentina

Jamaican reggae

- The two regions in the Western Hemisphere with the most descendents of the African diaspora and the richest and most varied assortment of African-related musical traditions are Brazil and the Caribbean.
- Our study of the music of the Caribbean is thus best understood as one cultural subset of the broader African diaspora.

RELATED WEB LINK

- The Atlantic Slave Trade in Two minutes (Slate.com) – a powerful animation

http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_history_of_american_slavery/2015/06/animated_interactive_of_the_history_of_the_atlantic_slave_trade.html

The African diaspora in the Americas refers to the people born in the Americas with partial, predominantly, or completely African ancestry. Many are descendants of persons enslaved in Africa and transferred to the Americas by Europeans, then forced to work mostly in European-owned mines and plantations, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. At present, they constitute around 200 million people in the population of the Americas. African Diaspora. 432,363 likes · 158,751 talking about this. News and Information. African Diaspora. September 12 at 10:53 AM · Ryan Clark says the only reason why fans booed the Houston Texans and The Kansas City Chiefs players when they linked arms was because they were supporting Black people. Africa is Calling Her Children Home. The African Diaspora Development Institute was born out of the desire to bring Africa to the world and the world to Africa. There currently is no one resource to easily find information about Africa. ADDI aims to become that resource. We have come to the realization that the current status of the African economy is due to the mass exodus of the African Diaspora out of Africa. The Diaspora Division serves as the focal point and hub for implementing the African Union decision to invite and encourage the African Diaspora to participate in the building and development of the African continent. Its main task therefore, is to serve as a catalyst for rebuilding the global African family in the service of the development and integration agenda of the continent. The division is under the Directorate Office of the department and takes directives and instructions from the Directorate Office. The African diaspora, together with the Jewish diaspora—the etymological and epistemological source of the term diaspora—enjoys pride of place in the increasingly crowded pantheon of diaspora studies. Studies of African diasporas can be divided into two broad categories. First, there are those that discuss the patterns of dispersal of African peoples around the world and the kinds of diasporic identities these populations developed in their new locations.