

# AFRICAN AMERICAN LIVES

Thirteen/WNET New York  
450 West 33rd Street  
New York NY 10001-2605  
thirteen.org



PBS

*Program Descriptions*

**press information**





## Episode Three: *Searching For Our Names*



Co-Produced By  
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Dr. Gates finds his genealogical research becoming even more difficult as he continues from the Civil War back through the Colonial period of American history. War service records and ways of recording property during slavery's apogee, such as inventories and sales or gifts of slaves, help fill in the participants' family trees. One participant is shocked to learn that an ancestor from this period, though a soldier, was neither African American nor fighting for the Union. Among the others, one, whose ancestors' slaveholders kept meticulous records, is able to visit the actual plantation where her ancestors labored; another obtains detailed records thanks to ancestors that were among the few 19th-century southern African Americans who were born and remained free over generations. Historians discuss how large slaveholders would have been bankrupt without free labor, while genealogists explain the difficulties inherent in research when African Americans have spent 12 generations enslaved compared to seven as free people. In West Virginia, Dr. Gates learns from a court transcript about the legal struggle of his ancestor Isaac Clifford, a free man who was kidnapped and accused of being a runaway slave.

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