

**African-Born U.S. Residents are the Most Highly Educated Group in American Society**



*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 13. (Autumn, 1996), pp. 33-34.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1077-3711%28199623%290%3A13%3C33%3AAURATM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C>

*The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* is currently published by CH II Publishers.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/chii.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

In 1972 the U.S. Postal Service built a bulk-mail distribution center on the land and the sculpture was moved to a salvage yard.

In the mid-1970s, the statue was “rescued” by a fire inspector who engaged his son’s Boy Scout troop to clean nearly a century’s worth of grime off the *Edmonia Lewis* sculpture. With no awareness of what they had found and hoping to make the statue look as presentable as possible, the Boy Scouts applied a fresh coat of paint to the marble surface of the Lewis masterpiece. In 1987 the sculpture was donated to the Forest Park Historical Society. Two years later the president of the society was able to identify the work. In 1994 the sculpture was given to the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American Art at which a two-year, \$30,000 restoration has just been completed.

Undoubtedly, racial attitudes played a role in guarding the obscurity of Edmonia Lewis and her work. Around the turn of the century so-called scientific racism had solidly “established” the inferior abilities of colored peoples. This included art as well as traditional academic endeavors. The works of black artists were not noticed nor did they appear in academic lectures. Museum curators were bound by similar racial attitudes. White art historians had no room in their research for the work of a black artist. Edmonia Lewis was forgotten long before she had passed on. There are no known records of her death or burial.



*Edmonia Lewis*

### Clarence Thomas: It’s Difficult to Get a Straight Story

“When I went to Yale Law School, they had reduced black admissions from 40 to 12. We were all there on our own merit. In subsequent years, that’s a fact that’s been clouded.”

Clarence Thomas, speaking at  
Texas Wesleyan University Law School  
March 7, 1996

“Judge Clarence Thomas, who has criticized racial preferences, was admitted to Yale under an affirmative action plan, university officials said.”

— *The New York Times*  
May 14, 1991

### □ African-Born U.S. Residents Are the Most Highly Educated Group in American Society

*Listen up those of you who believe that cognitive inferiority is hard-wired into the brains of black people. African-born immigrants who now reside in the United States are more highly educated than are U.S. whites. Though this group may include many nonblacks, it is important to note that their level of education exceeds that of immigrants in the United States from any other country in the world including all Asian groups.*

In a previous issue of JBHE,\* we reported that for the first time the 1990 census collected data on the educational attainment of foreign-born U.S. residents. Most demographers were surprised to read the results. Of all foreign-born U.S. residents, those who came from Africa had the highest level of educational attainment. Nearly 90 percent of African-born U.S. residents over the age of 25 are high school graduates. More than 47 percent of African-born U.S. residents have completed college. In comparison, only 23 percent of U.S. residents born in the United Kingdom and 38 percent of U.S. residents born in Asia (including China and Japan) are college graduates. In addition, African-born U.S. residents are more likely than foreign-born U.S. residents from all other areas of the globe to hold graduate degrees. More than 22 percent of all African-born U.S. residents hold a graduate degree and 4 percent hold a Ph.D. Only 2.7 percent of U.S. residents from all of Asia and 2 percent of all immigrants from Japan hold a doctorate. Immigrants from Africa also have far higher levels of educational attainment than does the entire white population of the United States — including immigrants and native-born whites.

---

*“The British census results make it very difficult indeed for the supporters of The Bell Curve thesis that cognitive inferiority is hard-wired into the brains of black people.”*

---

Before we unconditionally celebrate the intellectual superiority of black Africans, there are several points to consider. The census data did not include information on the race of the African-born immigrants to this country. The figures show only the continent or country of origin. Therefore, we do not know the percentages of African-

---

\*“African-Born U.S. Residents Have Achieved the Highest Levels of Educational Attainment,” JBHE, Number 4, Summer 1994, p. 10.

**African-Born Residents of the U.S. Are the Most Highly Educated Group in American Society**

*Percentage of the adult population that has achieved the designated education level or higher\**

Immigrants to the U.S. From	High School Graduate	College Graduate	Doctoral Degree
Africa	87.9%	47.1 %	4.1 %
Germany	73.9	19.1	1.9
Japan	86.4	35.0	2.1
United Kingdom	81.4	23.1	2.8
<b>All U.S. Citizens</b>			
White	81.5	22.6	0.9
Black	70.4	12.2	0.3

\*Figures are for persons ages 25 and over. Figures for immigrants are for the year 1990. Figures for U.S. citizens are for the year 1993.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau.

born U.S. residents who are from black Africa, Arab North Africa, or indeed whites fleeing problems in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. Research conducted at the Urban Institute in Washington suggests that in fact at least 40 percent of all immigrants from Africa to the United States are whites. Also, U.S. immigration laws, which favor people who have relatives already living in this country, have the effect of ensuring that very few black Africans are allowed to become permanent residents here in the U.S.A.

We must also take into account that a large number of black Africans who come to the United States do so under student visas to study at U.S. colleges and universities. Black Africans who come to the U.S. to further their education often belong to rather affluent and highly educated families in their nations on the African continent. In the early and mid-1980s more than 40,000 black Africans were studying at U.S. institutions of higher education with most coming from the nation of Nigeria. At that time, Nigeria was awash with oil revenues and could easily finance the education of its best and brightest students at elite American universities. Today, about 20,000 black African students are studying here but Kenya has replaced Nigeria as the most common country of origin. Many of these black college students end up staying on in the United States after graduation. African students who secure teaching positions after gaining their graduate degree may

apply for legal alien status. Others who study here meet and marry U.S. citizens and are permitted to apply for U.S. citizenship. In turn, these new foreign-born U.S. citizens are often able to secure immigration rights for other family members from Africa.

It appears then that the very high educational attainment of African-born U.S. residents is profoundly influenced by two facts. First, nearly one half of all African-born U.S. residents are rather wealthy white former residents of white-controlled African colonies. Second, for black Africans who reside here, many come to this country for the express purpose of gaining a college degree. Those who stay on will necessarily be college educated. In short, the African-born blacks who are in this country are a highly elite group.

The argument that the census results prove nothing because whites born in South Africa are present in the pool of the black people being counted tends to be refuted by census data from Great Britain. Black Africans in the United Kingdom are now the most highly educated members of British society. According to British census, more than 26 percent of adult black Africans in the United Kingdom hold academic qualifications higher than "A" or college levels compared with only 13.4 percent for white adults in the U.K. In short, blacks in the U.K. with African origins are outperforming British whites by a ratio of two to one.

Probably the most striking fact to turn up in the U.K. census is that in college qualifications black Africans in the U.K. now rank ahead of the U.K.-resident Chinese, an ethnic group that typically stands at or near the academic top in most Western countries.

Even if African-born blacks who immigrate to the U.K. tend to be an elite group who often go to the U.K. seeking education, the census results from Britain make life very difficult indeed for the supporters of *The Bell Curve* thesis that cognitive inferiority is hard-wired into the brains of black people.

Possibly the most valuable information the Census Bureau could now develop would be a refinement of these figures breaking down the statistics to show the race of African residents in the United States.

