

African Americans in El Paso (Images of America)

Maceo Crenshaw Dailey Jr, Kathryn Smith-McGlynn, Cecilia Gutierrez Venable



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El Pasos African American community can trace its origins back to the 16th century, when the black Moor known as Esteban roamed the southwest and, more significantly, those Africans in the party of conquistador Juan de Oñate crossed the Rio Grande in 1598. The modern El Paso African American community began to take shape in the 1880s, as the railroad industry, military establishment, and agricultural community all had black Americans in their ranks. Black leaders and their followers established a school and founded several significant black churches. Texass first state branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is recorded to have been formed in El Paso; the first major court cases that challenged the all-white Democratic primary came from this city; the Texas Western College basketball team won the NCAA championship in 1966 with five starting black players; and today, the city is inhabited by black military retirees, entrepreneurs, educators, and other professionals (each with vibrant and socially conscious organizations), making it a progressive model of community development.

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