



**Title:** Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019

**Author:** Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain (editors)

**Imprint:** One World

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# BOOK RESUME: FOUR HUNDRED SOULS

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

The story begins in 1619—a year before the *Mayflower*—when the *White Lion* disgorges “some 20-and-odd Negroes” onto the shores of Virginia, inaugurating the African presence in what would become the United States. It takes us to the present, when African Americans, descendants of those on the *White Lion* and a thousand other routes to this country, continue a journey defined by inhuman oppression, visionary struggles, stunning achievements, and millions of ordinary lives passing through extraordinary history.

*Four Hundred Souls* is a unique one-volume “community” history of African Americans. The editors, Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain, have assembled ninety brilliant writers, each of whom takes on a five-year period of that four-hundred-year span. The writers explore their periods through a variety of techniques: historical essays, short stories, personal vignettes, and fiery polemics. They approach history from various perspectives: through the eyes of towering historical icons or the untold stories of ordinary people; through places, laws, and objects. While themes of resistance and struggle, of hope and reinvention, course through the book, this collection of diverse pieces from ninety different minds, reflecting ninety different perspectives, fundamentally deconstructs the idea that Africans in America are a monolith—instead it unlocks the startling range of experiences and ideas that have always existed within the community of Blackness.

This is a history that illuminates our past and gives us new ways of thinking about our future, written by the most vital and essential voices of our present.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

“This project is a vital addition to that curriculum on race in America and should serve as a gateway to the solo works of all the voices in Kendi and Blain’s impressive choir.” —*The Washington Post*

“Feel the endurance and resilience of how Blacks resisted, revolted, organized, demanded, protested and rebelled. Feel the joy in the absurdity of remaining American in the face of such obstacles.” —George McCalman, *San Francisco Chronicle*

“An impeccable, epic, essential vision of American history as a whole and a testament to the resilience of Black people.” —*Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

“With a diverse range of up-and-coming scholars, activists, and writers exploring topics both familiar and obscure, this energetic collection stands apart from standard anthologies of African American history.” —*Publishers Weekly*

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\*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

“This seamless collection crackles with rage, beauty, bitter humor, and the indomitable will to survive.” —*Booklist* (starred review)

**AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

- Finalist for the 2022 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction
- Named One of the Best Books of the Year by: *The Washington Post*, *BookPage*, *BookRiot*, *Booklist*, and more

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