# African American History and Cultural Development in Tennessee

Posted on January 3, 2024

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## Early Black Life and Culture

Before 1860, free Blacks who lived in Nashville, Tennessee, faced difficult circumstances due to severe forms of racism that existed in American society, although they challenged the restrictions of slavery as compared to the Blacks living in other parts of the United States. I visited the website and understood the underlying objective that this tour company gives voice to the history of the earliest African American settlers and their culture as they arrived in Nashville. The website of this tour company focuses on the history and culture of African American people who were the most valuable resources in Nashville. Blacks in Nashville were the early free persons of color who arrived in the city of Nashville, Tennessee, fought for their voting rights, introduced the genre of classic country music, and overcame barriers of slavery (National Park Service, n.d.-a).

## New South Nashville

According to the information provided on the website regarding New South Nashville, New South Nashville makes up the southern section of the city from the Cumberland River to Antioch and Oak Hill. I have inferred that this part of Nashville has the evolving identity of a music city, and the company arranges a trip to the New South aimed at striking a balance between aspirations and authenticity for the tourists. The city has shaped some influential music icons who pioneered early African American music, including the Fisk Jubilee Singers (National Park Service, n.d.-b).

## Civil Rights Sit-ins

The sit-ins of 1960 in Nashville were the earliest successful non-violent action campaigns directed by the students and coordinated by the Nashville Christian Leadership Council and the Nashville Student Movement. The sit-in campaign lasted from Feb 13 to May 10 in the year 1960 with the aim to end racial segregation. This movement took place across the south of Nashville, in which student demonstrators occupied the downtown lunch counters in Nashville until their demands were met. In the beginning, the campaign began in Greensboro, North Carolina, and then substantially moved to the South to produce a new sense of power and pride for African American people across the United

States. After weeks of negotiations with protest leaders, an agreement was made on May 10 between leaders of the campaign and merchants that black customers would be served at the lunch counters opened by six major downtown stores. So, in my opinion, with that agreement, the Nashville sit-in campaign became the earliest southern movement to begin addressing racial concerns and desegregating public facilities. In this way, the Nashville sit-ins became a model for other African American civil rights protests around the United States aimed at ending racial segregation in the world and the United States in particular (Tennessee Encyclopedia, n.d.).

# Women's History Highlights

Nashville has played an important role in the women's rights movement apart from the city's significance in ending racial segregation, challenging the chains of slavery, developing the food scene, and shaping country music. The website of the tour company offers an insight into the lives of famous women of Nashville through taking a tour to the 4 most historic spots that showcase influential women of Nashville, which include The Hermitage Hotel, Ryman Auditorium, RCA Studio B, and Nelson's Green Brier Distillery. The Hermitage Hotel is a historic landmark as it played a significant role in ratifying the 19$^{th}$ Amendment that gave women the right to cast a vote. Ryman Auditorium is famous because of Lula C. Naff, a businesswoman who managed Ryman and turned it into a premier venue for musicals, jazz recitals, operas, religious revivals, etc. to draw big names and crowds until 1955. RCA Studio B is a historic site for tourists because it dates back to the country women artists of Nashville who introduced a genre of country music, including Dottie West and Dolly Parton. Lastly, Nelson's Green Brier Distillery is another historic spot that was taken over after Charles Nelson's death by his wife, Louisa, who continued selling whiskey by the barrel. Thus, she became the only woman in the history of the United States to run a distillery. I toured the 4 topmost historic spots related to the vulnerable yet powerful women of Nashville who created history to change the trajectory of the United States using the company's details (National Park Service, n.d.-c; Ryman Auditorium, n.d.; Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, n.d.; Nelson's Green Brier Distillery, n.d.).

# Fisk University and Meharry Medical College

Fisk University and Meharry Medical College are the two renowned African American colleges which entered into a partnership agreement to extend facilities for Black education. The company offers tours to both of the Black educational institutions in Nashville to help tourists realize the significance of the education of minority communities in the United States. The institutes remain committed to offering Black people the opportunity to become doctors so that they can go serve the minorities after their training. I delved deep into the details of these renowned African American institutions and found out that the institutes are committed to the goal of increasing the pipeline of Black medical professionals to serve minority communities in the United States as well as all over the globe (Fisk University, n.d.; Meharry Medical College, n.d.).

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