



# The Black Track

## *Office of African American Affairs*

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH: ARE WE ALL IN?

### Celebrate Black History

“I’m rooting for everyone Black” Issa Rae. [1] That statement was said on the red carpet at the Emmy awards in 2017 and went viral immediately. The audio was continuously used on social media reels, vines, and memes. As Black History month begins, the Office of African American Affairs says, “I’m rooting for everyone Black.” [1] In this article, we want to highlight the Black community in New Mexico. We all might have differences about how to get it done, but most of us want to see the progress of our people from the African diaspora.

As early as 1527, Esteban de Dorantes, an enslaved man of African descent, was reported as the first African American to set foot in New Mexico. [3] New Mexico has a rich history of African Americans and a history of unifying to achieve common goals. Such as establishing the state Department of the New Mexico Office of African American Affairs.



**“It does come from that kind of thinking, that African Americans-- being such a small population in New Mexico-- don’t have as much of an impact, they don’t have much of a voice or enough of a voice to make a change, which is just not true.”**  
**Mason Graham**



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There is no truth in presenting New Mexico as a triculture state; it has limited African Americans access to funding. In 2021 Cathryn McGill said, “Most Black-led organizations in the state have been volunteer-run, as opposed to operating with paid staff, which has prevented organizations from investing full time in their work. [2] As equity and inclusion departments pop up throughout the state, we must review if they are financially supported to meet their goals.

According to the 2020 Census, the African American population in New Mexico is less than 5%. [4] New Mexico is presented as being a “tricultural” state consisting of Anglo, Hispanic, and Native Americans. That popular mythology leaves out other groups, including us, the Black and African communities of New Mexico. New Mexico is a desert, but it is like fertile ground for the African American population. Mason Graham said, “We’ve always had a place here; we just haven’t been seen.” [2]

The New Mexico Black community has never let this misrepresentation stop our progress. We are continuing to get better positioned to benefit our community. There is a plentiful amount of Black-owned or Black lead organizations. Although we won’t be able to mention them all, let’s highlight some. Amongst these organizations is the New Mexico Black Chamber of Commerce, National Society of Black Engineers, New Mexico Black Leadership Council, Blacks in Government, New Mexico Black Lawyers Association, The Gallup Center on Black Voices, and branches of the NAACP in Santa Fe, San Juan, Rio Rancho, Alamogordo, Otero, Gallup, Hobbs, Eddy, Dona Ana County, Chaves, Clovis, and Albuquerque. We might be separated in distance or process, but we are not separated from our common goal. All hands in Black New Mexico; we need to be seen and heard.

### Article Reference



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