

A background collage of African American people, including a man in a white shirt, a woman in a white dress, and a group of people, with the words 'Representation, Identity, and Diversity' written in a cursive font across the middle.

BLACK HISTORY 2020 MONTH ESSAY CONTEST

THE BLACK FAMILY

REPRESENTATION, IDENTITY, AND DIVERSITY

The black family has been a topic of study in many disciplines — history, literature, visual arts and film studies, sociology, anthropology, and social policy. Its representation, identity, and diversity have been revered, stereotyped, and vilified from the days of slavery to our own time. The black family knows no single location, since family reunions and genetic-ancestry searches testify to the spread of family members across states, nations, and continents. Not only are individual black families diasporic, but Africa and the diaspora itself have been long portrayed as the black family writ large. While the role of the black family has been described by some as a microcosm of the entire race, its complexity as the “foundation” of African American life and history can be seen in numerous debates over how to represent its meaning and typicality from a historical perspective — as slave or free, as patriarchal or matriarchal/matrifocal, as single-headed or dual-headed household, as extended or nuclear, as fictive kin or blood lineage, as legal or common law, and as black or interracial, etc. Variation appears, as well, in discussions on the nature and impact of parenting, childhood, marriage, gender norms, sexuality, and incarceration. The family offers a rich tapestry of images for exploring the African American past and present.

INSTRUCTIONS/REQUIREMENTS:

Choose a prompt from the list below and write a research-based essay, with Modern Language Association (MLA) manuscript style and documentation, at least 850 words in length, which integrates at least 5 sources, especially material found in the library databases or other library resources into the text. Some possible sources include – but are not limited to – newspaper articles, interviews, any sort of testimony by individuals directly involved, court cases, police reports, and magazines. Should your essay include family stories, or other such material, be sure to conduct interviews, watch reunion videos, as examples, please include them in your Works Cited.

Please be as specific as possible in providing examples. Formal conventions such as introduction, body, conclusion – although necessary – should take on less importance than logic, clarity, essay form, structure, and examples in your essay. Provide a creative title for your essay. Answer the prompt you choose to the best of your ability.

All parenthetical and Works Cited page citations must reflect MLA eighth edition style. Handouts on the new version of MLA documentation are available for free at the SAC Writing Center, <https://www.alamo.edu/sac/about-sac/college-offices/writing-center/resources/> [click on MLA Eighth edition] or by accessing this link: <https://style.mla.org/> and navigating via the menu to examples.

The essay must be double-spaced, 12-point type Times New Roman font.

Include a cover sheet providing your name, Banner ID, last 4 digits of SSN, a current phone number, e-mail address (that you check frequently), and a current address. **DO NOT include your name or any other kind of identifying information in a header.**

STUDENTS must be currently enrolled at San Antonio College with at least 6 hours and a minimum a 2.0 GPA.

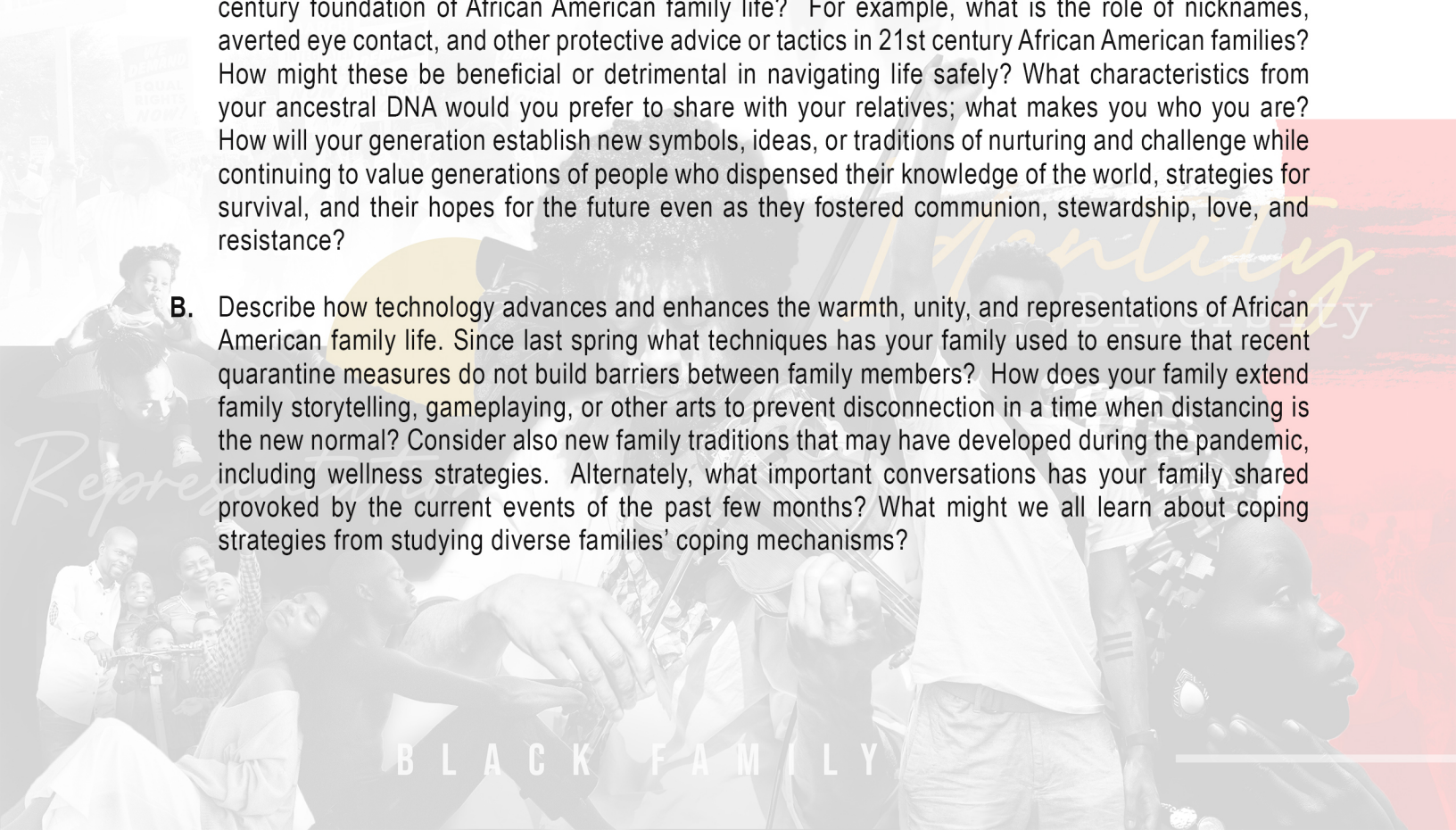
The Black History Month Committee participant requirements include:

1. Arrange for at least ONE tutoring session at the SAC Writing Center prior to turning in the essay (make an appointment); OR
2. Seek the assistance of one of our librarians through an individualized library session here <http://sacguide.libguides.com/bookalib> to insure high-quality research is the foundation of the essay;
3. Submit as a word file (.doc or .docx) to Jane Focht-Hansen (jfocht-hansen@alamo.edu).
4. Entries due by **5 p.m. Friday, February 13, 2021.**

Should any of the above requirements not be met, following submission and requirements check, the essay will not be included in the competition.

PROMPTS:

- A. What ideas, traditions, and traits derived from ancestral DNA and experience represent the 21st century foundation of African American family life? For example, what is the role of nicknames, averted eye contact, and other protective advice or tactics in 21st century African American families? How might these be beneficial or detrimental in navigating life safely? What characteristics from your ancestral DNA would you prefer to share with your relatives; what makes you who you are? How will your generation establish new symbols, ideas, or traditions of nurturing and challenge while continuing to value generations of people who dispensed their knowledge of the world, strategies for survival, and their hopes for the future even as they fostered communion, stewardship, love, and resistance?
- B. Describe how technology advances and enhances the warmth, unity, and representations of African American family life. Since last spring what techniques has your family used to ensure that recent quarantine measures do not build barriers between family members? How does your family extend family storytelling, gameplaying, or other arts to prevent disconnection in a time when distancing is the new normal? Consider also new family traditions that may have developed during the pandemic, including wellness strategies. Alternately, what important conversations has your family shared provoked by the current events of the past few months? What might we all learn about coping strategies from studying diverse families' coping mechanisms?



- C. Kitchens represent far more than relaxation, sharing, nourishment, and better health. It is the heartbeat of a home where families gather traditionally to simultaneously share a meal, chatter, and stories which shape the beauty of mutual experience. Anthropologists assert that commensality, eating and drinking together, is one of the most important features of sociality in all cultures. Even non-verbalized teaching and learning occurs over a meal. Sociologists say not only do we feel better during and after such sharing, but participants also feel more grateful, developing trust with the people at the table, feeling less alone. Other researchers assert we are further able to shift people's perspectives on such things as inequality, genders, races, and socio-economic circumstance through the give and take of sharing a meal and conversation. Describe how your family's shared meals, kitchen table conversations, or other traditional gatherings to bond allow for the sharing of family culture and heritage across generations. Recall a story or two from such family gatherings that sustains you to this day.
- D. Write a letter to someone you know and hold in esteem in your extended or nuclear family, presenting a new definition and description of the what the 21st century will be like when American culture reverences and values families regardless of structure, size, religious affiliation, ethnic, economic background or other characteristic, especially concerning the nature and impact of spirituality, parenting, childhood, education, marriage, gender norms, sexuality, and incarceration. What is your dream for your family within 21st century American culture?

