

# Why is the term “Africanized” problematic in a racist society...

## and what we can do about it?



Angela Roell, Jennifer Van Wyk, Hannah Whitehead

# Roadmap

1. Set broader context of race in US agriculture

1. Understand the history of the term **“Africanized”** in the United States

1. Examine some possible **solutions in language use** moving forward



[smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com)

# Beekeeping within the Context of the United States' Food System

*“Racism is built into the DNA of the United States’ food system. It began with the genocidal theft of land from First Nations people, and continued with the kidnapping of [African] ancestors from the shores of West Africa. Under the brutality of the whip and the devastation of broken families, enslaved Africans cultivated the tobacco and cotton that made America wealthy.”*

-Leah Penniman, Soul Fire Farm, NY, USA

1

**Slavery launched modern capitalism and turned the U.S. into the wealthiest country in the world.**

**Slave-harvested cotton dominated the 19th-century international market.**

U.S. COTTON PRODUCTION

1859  
2.25 billion pounds

1790 1.5 million pounds

U.S. COTTON USED IN BRITISH TEXTILE INDUSTRY

By the 1830s

77%



**Cotton built New York City into a commercial and financial center.**

For every dollar cotton made, about 40 cents ended up in New York as the city supplied insurance, shipping, and financing.

NEW YORK'S SHARE OF ALL COTTON REVENUE

40%

**The nation paid reparations to slave holders—not to slaves.**

No

40 ACRES AND A MULE

President Andrew Johnson overturned Gen. Sherman's famous promise, which would have redistributed roughly 400,000 acres to newly freed black families.

\$300

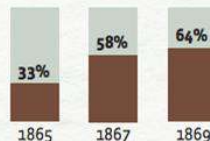
PER FREED SLAVE

On April 16, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill ending slavery in the District of Columbia, providing for compensation to former owners.

**Vagrancy laws allowed police to sweep up black men and then rent them out as convict labor.**

Following the war, convict leasing programs shifted the Southern prison populations to predominantly black.

BLACK CONVICTS IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE'S MAIN PRISON



2

**Emancipation did not bring economic freedom to former slaves.**

**Discriminatory business policies kept white people economically ahead.**

Black Codes were enacted to stop African Americans from owning their own businesses.

BUSINESS LICENSING FEES  
Under Black Codes in 1870



Southern merchants used unfair credit to impede black wealth building.

INTEREST RATES  
CHARGED BY MERCHANTS  
1881–1889



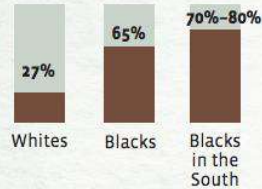
Infographic by Jeff Neumann and Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn. Research by Heidi Bruce and Clo Copass. Images from Library of Congress



### Social safety nets have missed African Americans.

Social Security originally excluded domestic and agricultural workers—mostly African Americans, especially in the South.

INELIGIBLE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY IN 1935



4

**The result:**  
African Americans have not been able to get a foothold in the economy.

The income gap has not budged since 1970.

For every dollar of assets white households have ...



... black households have a dime.



3

**Discriminatory policies then kept African Americans from receiving help other citizens received.**

Racist policies contributed to the decline of black farmers.

By 1982, only 1.5 percent of farmers were black, and the USDA's Civil Rights Office—which investigated loan program discrimination complaints—was closed.

FARMLAND OWNED BY AFRICAN AMERICANS



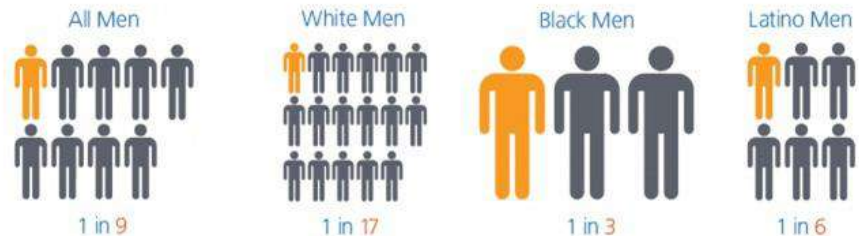
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME in 2013



5

**Discriminatory policies lead to mass incarceration of African Americans**

### Lifetime Likelihood of Imprisonment



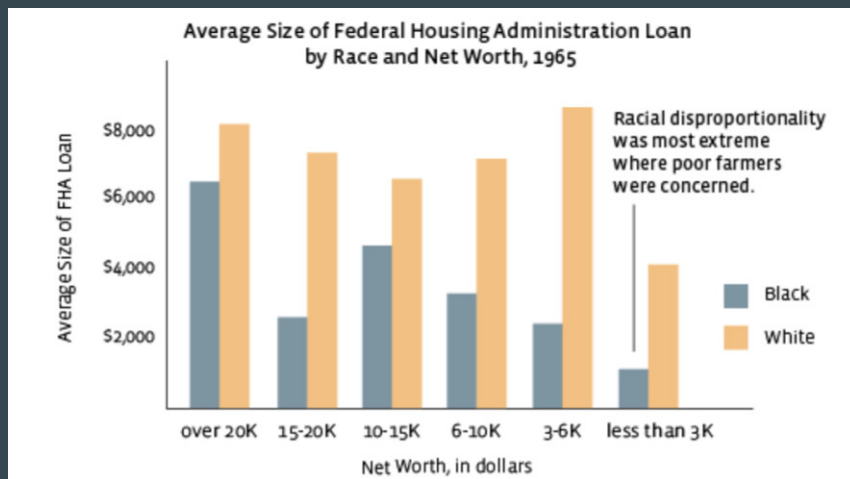
Source: Bonczar, T. (2003). *Prevalence of Imprisonment in the U.S. Population, 1974-2001*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics.



Infographic by Jeff Neumann and Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn.  
Research by Heidi Bruce and Clo Copass. Images from Library of Congress

# Black farmers have been pushed off the land by racist policies

US Federal Farm aid programs discriminated against black farmers throughout the 20th century

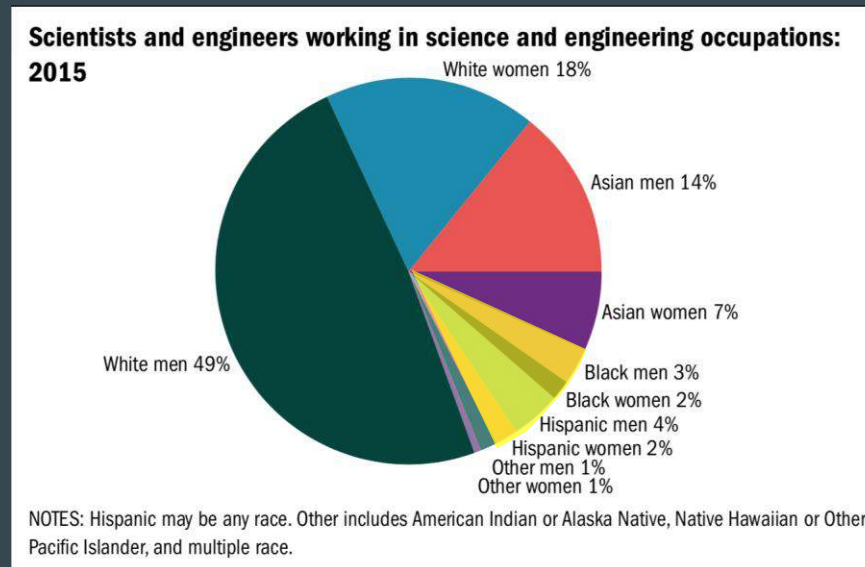


The amount of farmland controlled by African Americans has consistently declined since 1900

**Today, farming is one of the five whitest professions in the country. (2013)**

1. Veterinarians
2. **Farmers, Ranchers** — 95.8% white
3. Mining Machine Operators
4. Speech-Language Pathologists
5. Millwrights

# In the United States today people of the global majority are underrepresented in science and engineering fields:



## Only 2.5% of US Life Scientists are black

# Historic African Heritage figures in agricultural science and beekeeping



Booker T. Washington



George Washington Carver



Martha Murray Washington



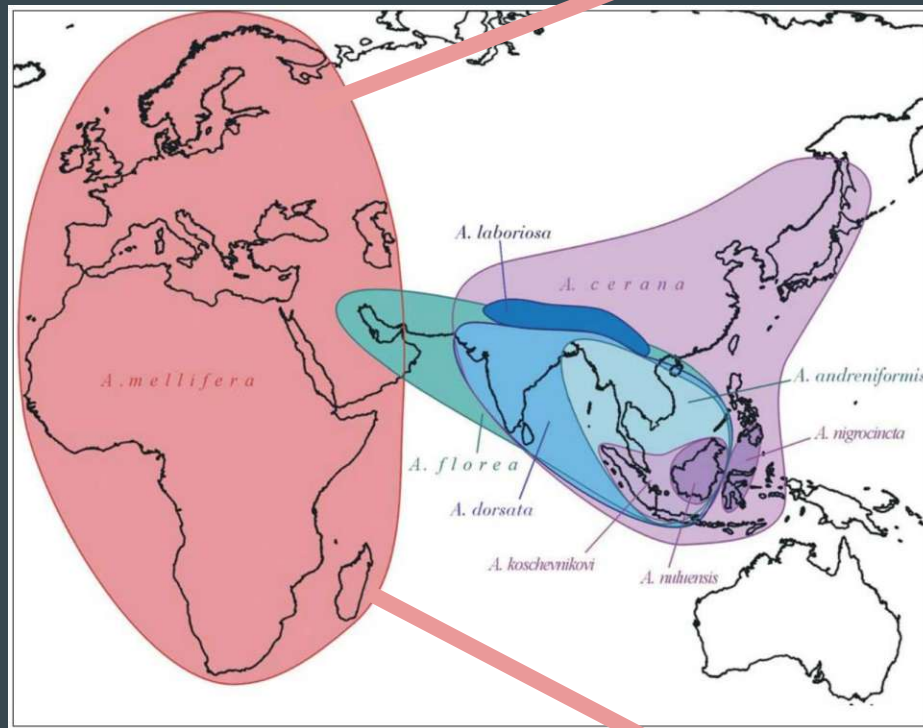
Charles Henry Turner



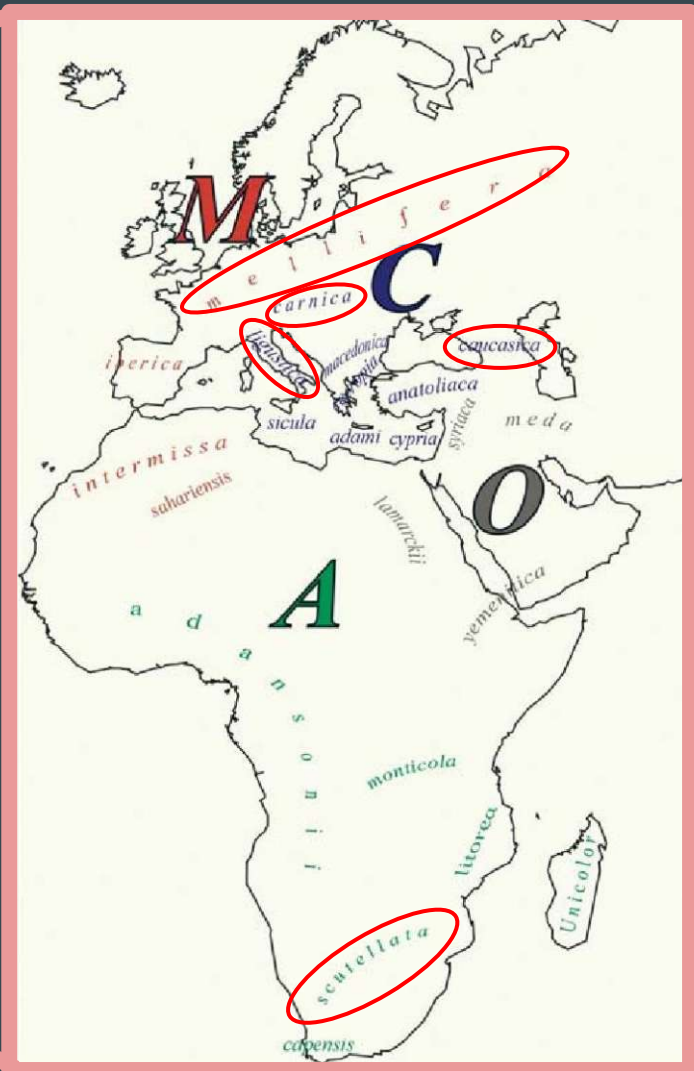
Martha Murray Washington, Tuskegee University, Alabama



# *Apis mellifera* is not native to North America



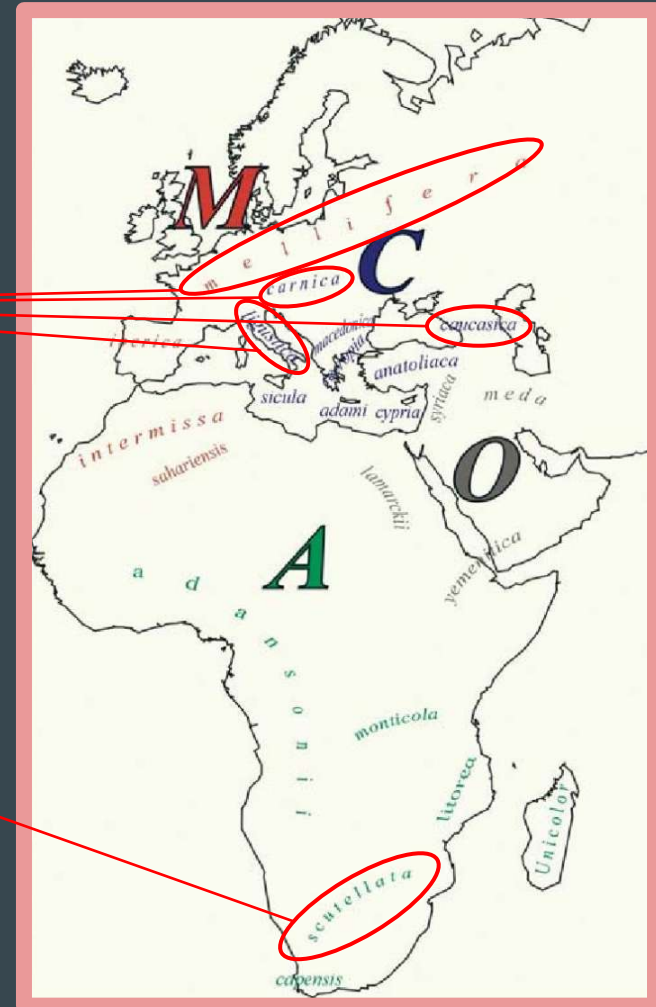
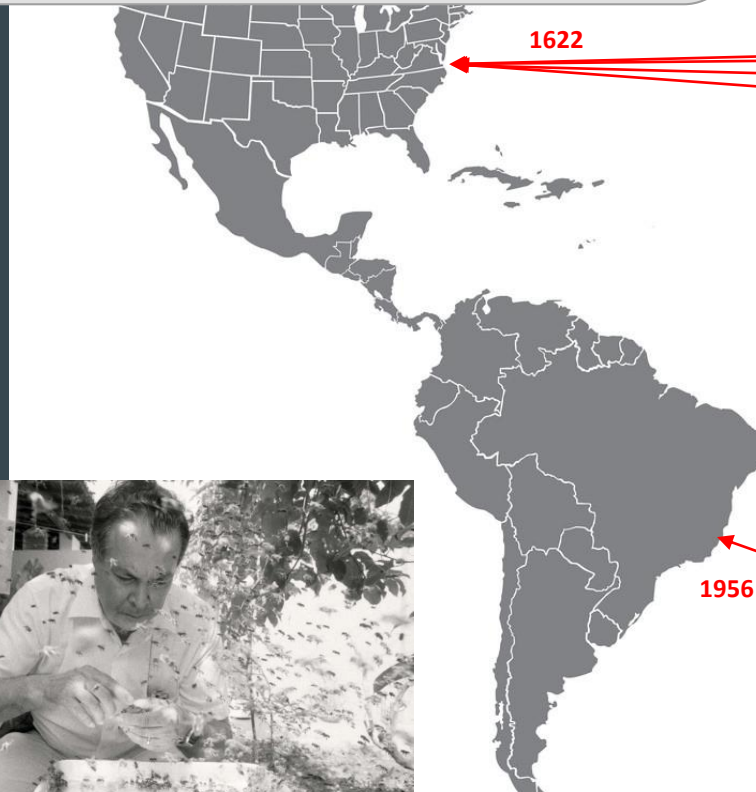
Species of *Apis*



Subspecies of *Apis mellifera*

# How did *Apis mellifera* get to America?

"The bees have generally extended themselves into the country, a little in advance of the white settlers. The [First Nations people] therefore call them the **white man's fly**" - Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*

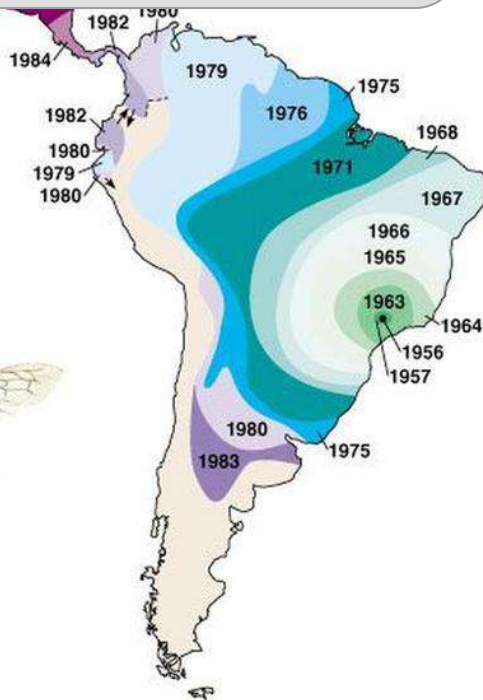


# Characteristics of "Africanized" Bees

**"Frenzy/fear" only in US.**  
The term "killer bee" was  
coined in 1965 in the US



African honey bee



Copyright © Pearson Education, Inc., publishing as Benjamin Cummings.

- Improved honey production
- Collect more propolis and pollen
- More adapted to tropical climates, thus forage longer hours.
- Can thrive and produce honey in regions not accessible to European bees.
- Higher *Varroa* tolerance
- Can be more aggressive, however display a wide range of behaviors (and European bees can also be aggressive)

**“Our first priority is to keep these bees out of the country” said Tom Rinderer, “and our next priority is to learn how to manage them, if and when they cross our borders. Our long-term goal is to alter these bees genetically to reduce undesirable traits.”**



# “Africanized” honey bees are federally classified as “Invasive”; European honey bees are not

## Africanized Honeybee

[View all resources for Africanized Honeybee](#)

[Terrestrial Invasives](#) ▼

[Terrestrial Plants](#)

[Terrestrial Vertebrates](#)

**[Terrestrial Invertebrates](#)**

[Terrestrial Pathogens and Diseases](#)



**Scientific Name:** *Apis mellifera scutellata*  
Lepelletier ([Ellis and Ellis 2008](#); [Sheppard and Smith 2000](#))

**Common Name:** Africanized honeybee, African honey bee (AHB), killer bee

**Photo:** Adult of the African strain of the honey bee seen at the edge of the Ngorongoro Crater - Photo by Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University

# Why it is problematic to use “Africanized” in a historically racist society:

- Reinforces US-based stereotypes about African heritage relating to violence
- Negative bias towards “Africanized” bees -> keeps us from seeing benefits such as higher *Varroa* tolerance; prevents genetic diversity
- Beekeeping is less inclusive based on the language

**So where do we go from here?**

Terry McGlynn is petitioning to change the common name of *Aphaenogaster araneoides* (“Gypsy Ant”)



Image: Benoit Guenard



# Potential Replacements



- Equatorial
- *Scutellata*
- Ideas?



# Some contemporary beekeepers of the Global Majority in the US



**Detroit Hives**  
Detroit MI



**Island Bee Project**  
New York, NY



**Oxx Beekeeping**  
Kissimmee, FL



**Zia Queenbees**  
Taos, NM

