

Gene screens show Appalachian Mulungeons likely of sub-Saharan ancestry

For years, varied and sometimes wild claims have been made about the origins of a group of dark-skinned Appalachian residents once known derisively as the Melungeons. Some speculated they were descended from Portuguese explorers, or perhaps from Turkish slaves or Gypsies. Now a new DNA study in the Journal of Genetic Genealogy attempts to separate truth from oral tradition and wishful thinking. The study found the truth to be somewhat less exotic: Genetic evidence shows that the families historically called Melungeons are the offspring of sub-Saharan African men and white women of northern or central European origin.

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