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History

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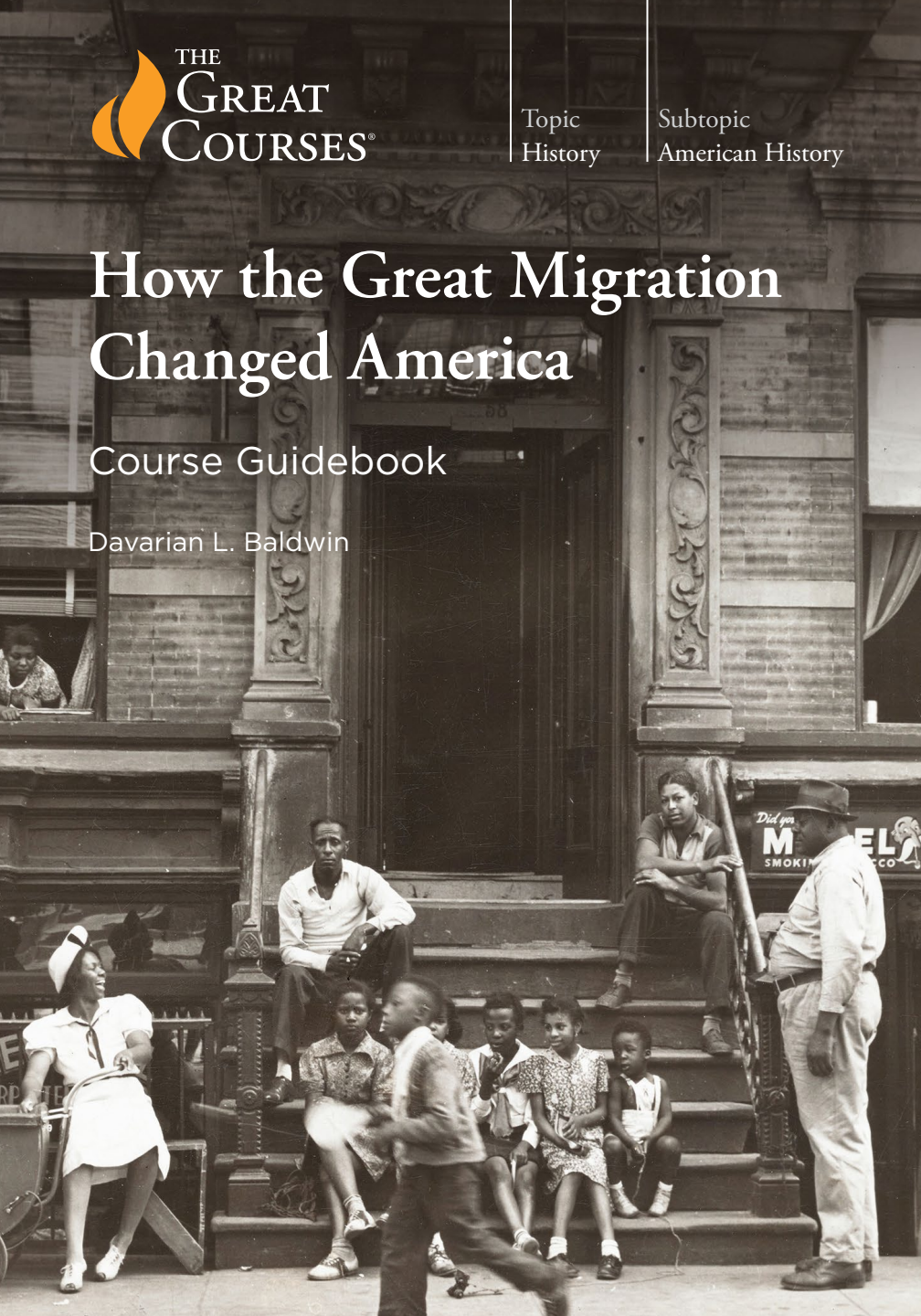
How the Great Migration Changed America

Course Guidebook

Davarian L. Baldwin



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1

The Great Migration Is My Story and Yours

The Great Migration of African Americans lasted from the 1910s to the 1970s. It spread from the US South to change the literal complexion of cities and towns across the Northeast, Midwest, and West. During this time, an estimated 6 million African Americans joined the exodus from a Jim Crow life. Traditions and memories always traveled with them, melding and infusing American culture with a new lifeblood in urban politics, organized labor, the factory floor, and sports. As New York's Harlem Renaissance clearly shows, Black migrants revolutionized American dance, popular music, and literature. Everything from jazz, blues, and gospel music to state lotteries, civil rights, and even open-heart surgery was created by the children of the Great Migration. As this course will show you, these migrants—and the world they made—profoundly shaped the America of today.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

In the brutal farming system called sharecropping, poor farmers rented or leased a plot of land along with a supply of seed, tools, and other resources. This farming system preyed on poor and largely African American workers through a corrupt bookkeeping practice. The cost of renting supplies, with a never-defined level of interest, was almost always calculated to be more than the value of the crops. So many Black sharecroppers were compelled to move to the urban North by the dual forces of looking for a better economic life and frustration with the realities of Jim Crow terrorism.

The Great Migration took place in two significant phases, the first occurring between approximately 1915 and the mid-1930s. More than 1.5 million African Americans moved to the North, largely from Southern towns and cities. The migration experience created a vibrant and extended community between specific Southern states and particular Northern cities. Maps of the Great Migration clearly show these tracks, called migration chains. These migration chains continue to hold significance not only for tracking the historical mobility of people but also for understanding distinct Black cultural trends in different regions.

In the first phase, there was a small chain from Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas to the US West. Today, Roscoe's House of Chicken 'N Waffles in Los Angeles is an example of the influence of this migration chain. The Chicago blues sound and specific barbecuing techniques are informed by the migration chains from Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee. In New York City, the Black experience is shaped by migrants from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Florida, and the Caribbean.

Migration slowed down during the 1930s because of the devastating effects of the Great Depression. This is why researchers think of the Great Migration as happening in two phases. According to the traditional view, immigration restrictions during World War I halted the movement of people from Southern and Eastern Europe to the US. However, because of wartime production, industries in the US North needed a labor supply, so they sent agents to the South and pulled African Americans to the North with job opportunities. Once there, migrants sent for family and friends, who were also pulled to Northern cities and towns. These pull factors of economic promise still largely shape how the story of the Great Migration is told.

PUSH FACTORS

Ultimately, the Great Migration is primarily seen as the search for a better life through better jobs. But when looking at the context of migration, it's also necessary to consider the conditions of violence, injustice, and inhumanity that influenced African Americans in making the decision to abandon the South. People don't want to leave their families and familiar lives to go just anywhere. Even during the massive exodus of millions to the North, an overwhelming majority of African Americans stayed in the South. In short, life-changing decisions about where to live need to involve more than just economic factors.

The brutal realities of Southern life, from Jim Crow segregation and lynching to sexual violence, became some of the many push factors that helped define the Great Migration as a movement for freedom. This freedom was shaped by desires for human dignity, freedom over one's body, a vision of collective justice, and the possibility of simply living without the constant threat of violence and death.

Before the official start of the Great Migration in 1915, African Americans were already moving from the rural South to Southern cities like Birmingham, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia. World War I simply offered a significant opportunity for that development to continue.

The jobs made available during World War I were certainly important. However, they were more the means to a greater end—a way out of the Jim Crow South. So it's better to understand the Great Migration as a long-term and ongoing trend of social mobilization. The movement was a people's collective act of resistance in the long fight against inhumane and racist living conditions in Jim Crow America. This search for freedom would not end just because migrants escaped the South.

CONDITIONS IN THE NORTH

An extreme diversity of Southern migration experiences informed cities like New York, St. Louis, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Sociologists, labor recruiters, and newspapers continually painted the picture of a sharp contrast between the modern glitz and glamor of places like Harlem or Chicago's South Side and the bleak, primitive naiveté of rural Southern migrants.

However, such depictions were far from accurate reflections of the actual migration experience, especially during the first phase of movement. For example, only approximately 25% of the early migrants who ended up in Chicago were strictly agricultural laborers. The other 75% had between 5 and 10 years of experience working in factories in those Southern cities and towns. Most African American migrants were already familiar with urban and industrial conditions, and they had a high rate of literacy.

However, both Black and White leaders and reformers benefited from talking about the migrants as unprepared for city living. This perception could translate into lower wages, inferior housing, and unequal access to city resources. This myth also excused the mistreatment of migrants in the name of protecting the city and created a market for reformers whose job was to "save" migrants from themselves. Migrants were demonized as a population that needed to be physically contained and socially reformed.

No matter their skills, African Americans were relegated to service positions. One of the most common entry points into factory work for Black men was as strikebreakers because even most labor unions fought hard against racial integration. Black women were almost exclusively restricted to jobs as domestics. At the same time, racial violence took place. Black workers were assaulted if they dared cross a picket line to get a job. Anonymous cars drove by and firebombed Black homeowners who had the audacity to move into White areas. At the height of the migration, White youth patrolled unspoken boundaries in neighborhoods, at movie theaters, and even on beaches to prevent African Americans having access to city life.

These more intimate acts of violence became public policy with the rise of racially restrictive housing covenants. Before the Great Migration, White homeowners added clauses to their housing deeds to restrict who could purchase their homes. However, during the massive influx of African Americans into Northern cities, White homeowners realized that deed restrictions on individual houses would not be enough to hold the line on residential segregation.

The National Association of Real Estate Boards popularized a legal document known as a racially restrictive covenant. These covenants were legally binding agreements, usually between White homeowners and neighborhood associations. Under threat of civil action, the homeowners could not rent, sell, or lease to African Americans. Ultimately, the realities of housing segregation and economic exploitation led to overcrowded and impoverished Black neighborhoods.

MIGRANT POWER

Confronted with such dire conditions, Black migrants and old settlers faced this inequality head on. To paraphrase historian Earl Lewis, they "turned segregation into congregation." All African Americans were compressed and contained into various Black Belts or Black Bottoms in migration-era cities all over the country. Residents saw how this containment could be converted into a powerful block of Black activists, Black voters, and Black consumers. Over time, these areas became known as cities within cities.

Migrants were able to vote for local Black politicians and use their meager wages to support Black banks, huge churches, and vibrant corridors of retail and nightlife. The mixture of existing Black residents and new migrants gave life to the wellness industry and powered the independent filmmaking world. The Great Migration also made possible the 20th-century soundtrack for American life, from jazz to hip-hop.

Black newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* captured this vibrant Black life. They also began to comment on the rise of a cultural renaissance in Harlem that cultivated the art and ideas of luminaries such as W. E. B. Du Bois, artist Aaron Douglas, writer Langston Hughes, and cultural critic and scholar Zora Neale Hurston.

There was also talk of an amazing team in the new sport of basketball called the Harlem Globetrotters. They would go on to revolutionize the game, and although they were from Chicago, they chose the name *Harlem* because they wanted everyone to know they were Black. And Marcus Garvey, who would make his way to the US from Jamaica, was an *actual* globetrotter. His Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) would capture the dreams of Black independence and self-determination for oppressed people worldwide.

When African Americans were excluded from the banking industry, they brought their lotteries from the South and the Caribbean to build their own pathways to economic opportunity. The variously termed *numbers* or *policy* gambling became a vast underground economy used to support Black-owned churches, businesses, the Negro league baseball system, and even political movements like Garvey's UNIA.

During the Great Depression, migrants powered the labor movement. They forced America to think about the ways capitalism depended on a world filled with the haves and the have-nots. America had not yet turned its eyes to Hitler's troops storming across Europe. But when African Americans saw the growing power of fascism—a government-sponsored system of winners and losers based on racial purity—they saw a reflection of their lives in America. So when the US joined the war to fight fascism, Black people called for a Double V—victory against fascism abroad and racism at home. Citizen soldiers on the home front would set the tone for what became the Black Freedom Movement, also known as the civil rights movement. The movement was a call for freedom for equal wages and work conditions, quality housing, and an end to police brutality.

Migrants and their children set the terms of theater, dance, music, fashion, language, prayer, and protest. The conditions of racial exclusion cultivated languages of creative ambition—of freedom dreams still hoped for, if not quite achieved. Today, the continuing struggle for freedom in the resilient forms of resistance by Black Lives Matter and other social justice movements is part of the legacy of the Great Migration.

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Exodus: Why Migrants Quit the South

In the New South, the Jim Crow conditions of separate but equal reigned. Black Southerners were subjected to separate and inferior public facilities, less pay for the same work, the constantly looming threat of sexual violence, street-level acts of disrespect, and the intimate terror of lynchings. These push factors drove the groundswell of dissent that led to the Great Migration. At the onset of the movement, the migration was described in biblical terms—as the children of Egypt being led to the promised land. To fully appreciate this journey, you must first understand how segregation, black codes, and Jim Crow laws pushed generations of migrants to the North and subsequently transformed the landscape of the United States.

THE NEW SOUTH AND BLACK CODES

At the turn of the 20th century, Atlanta, Georgia was celebrated as the capital of the New South. What Americans called the Negro problem was an obsession with how to maintain the same racial hierarchy of the slave era without the legal controls afforded by slavery. In the New South, Black labor was integrated into factories on the lowest rungs of the workforce. African Americans were cordoned off into separate neighborhoods in distinct parts of Southern cities without any political power. Historians consider this period the low point of race relations.

Immediately following emancipation, America scrambled to contain the mobility and power of free Black labor. In the period between the slavery-abolishing Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 and the 1868 recognition of citizenship with the Fourteenth Amendment, African Americans were free by law but held no civil rights. This political purgatory left them subject to a range of draconian state laws known as the black codes.

Many have called the black codes, and the Jim Crow laws that followed, slavery by another name. The codes were different from state to state. However, in many states, Black people had to be employed at all times. Sometimes, this requirement meant they had to secure a work contract with their former plantation masters. Those in violation could be arrested and charged with vagrancy, and the penalty for vagrancy often included forced plantation labor. The ultimate goal was to counter the freedom that came with emancipation.

Many African Americans wished to acquire their own land and start subsistence farming to feed their families, make some money, and control their own labor. But the vagrancy laws of the black codes kept them bound to the plantation economy, where production would continue to serve White industrialists and planters. The White South could thus maintain control over a profitable Black labor force. Other state laws banned African Americans from buying liquor, carrying weapons, entering into interracial marriage, and sitting on juries. Some laws could even require them to have written permission to enter towns.

JIM CROW

In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified, guaranteeing a universal right for men to vote without regard to race, creed, or previous condition of servitude. But when federal troops agreed to leave the former confederacy in 1877, Southern states quickly established a new world of racial subservience and terror called Jim Crow. In the broadest sense, Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation in schools, on public transportation, at drinking fountains, in restrooms, at jobs, in neighborhoods, and even at burial services.

Jim Crow's purpose was to maintain segregation within the confines of new equal protection laws. The new strategy was called equal segregation, based on the claim that a society could have separate facilities for racial groups and still meet the legal standard of equality. However, in almost all cases, the Black facilities were grossly inferior. The Jim Crow order legally lasted for 100 years, until 1965.

Because all males could now legally vote, states instituted other forms of racial restriction to undermine political power. Costly poll taxes were required when registering to vote. Mandatory literacy tests included being forced to recite

some esoteric statute from state law from memory. The grandfather clause granted exemption from these taxes and tests to anyone who had the right to vote—or whose ancestors could vote—before the Civil War. Obviously, such exemptions protected all White voters and prevented descendants of the enslaved from voting. Since Black people couldn't register to vote, they also couldn't sit on juries, which meant no trials by a jury of their peers.

The series of state-level laws and policies of "separate but equal" became national law with the 1896 passage of the Supreme Court ruling *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Jim Crow became a way of life that included daily rules of etiquette and extralegal forms of terror and plunder. For example, if a Black person and a White person were walking toward each other on a narrow sidewalk, the Black person had to step into the dirty street to let the White person pass unfettered. A breach of such racial etiquette could be dangerous, even criminal.

African Americans were placed under heavy surveillance and thrown into jail based on very loose interpretations of the law. The details of the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery—except "as punishment for crime." This allowed a convict lease system to grow and flourish throughout the US South. Under this system, an overwhelming number of African Americans were thrown into jail and then leased out to provide free labor for public works like bridges or to private companies, including U. S. Steel. Such restrictive labor relations also shaped the Southern sharecropping system.

African American families that still fought to acquire land in the Jim Crow South faced the additional threat of whitecapping—resentful Whites coming in the cover of night to violently dispossess Black residents from their hard-earned property. These early night riders set the tone for what became the Ku Klux Klan. And any Black breach of the Jim Crow order could result in a lynching, often carried out by lawless mobs. Law enforcement officials also participated under the pretext of justice.

Lynchings were not just about keeping Black people in their place—they were also public amusements designed to instruct White Southerners about proper behavior in a Jim Crow society. According to the Howard Center for Investigative Journalism, more than half of the photographs of lynchings show White people smiling and celebrating.

SARAH BREEDLOVE

Jim Crow accelerated Black Southerners' exodus from Dixie, even as White planters tried to hold on to a way of life underwritten by Black subordination and servitude. Black domestic labor stood at the center of this world. Black women toiled in the only occupation made available to them: household work.

Sarah Breedlove's story captures the broad conditions that many African Americans braved at the turn of the 20th century. Sarah was born in 1867 in Madison Parish, Louisiana. When her parents died unexpectedly before she was 8 years old, Sarah was quickly thrust into adulthood. Federal troops left the South in the 1870s, and the threats of violence by so-called Southern White Redeemers inched ever closer to her parish. Sarah soon joined her sister and brother-in-law across the river in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Once there, Sarah was thrust into the labor always left for Black women—domestic work, specifically as a laundress.

Once Sarah decided to head even further north, she took advantage of the migration chain created by her brothers, who had set up a barbershop in St. Louis. She eventually met and married C. J. Walker. From this point forward, she would be known as Madam C. J. Walker. This new level of family security gave Madam Walker a greater sense of confidence and status, and she began to experiment with a beauty treatment for healthy hair and scalps.

As if at a prayer meeting, Walker testified before women about the fear of almost going bald. She stated that when she prayed to God for an answer, the formula came to her in a dream. A big Black man appeared in this dream and told her what to mix. This testimonial form of advertising was popular in the early days of US mass commercial culture. It pulled from a range of traditions, from religious testimony and mysticism to African-centered conjure culture that migrants brought with them from the South.

This story, however, downplayed the fact that Walker had become an amateur chemist. She designed a range of ointments, salves, powders, and soaps to introduce Black women to a world of self-care as an avenue to becoming modern. Early on, there was limited acceptance of this kind of beauty culture in the Black community. It was dismissed as a waste of money and, by some, as an attempt to look White.

In the hands of migrant women, however, beauty culture eventually became a means for taking back one's body and time from the control of White servitude. Beauty systems could remedy the problems of scalp disease, blemishes, and hair breakage associated with poverty. Heavily adorned hair and faces also became a visual break from Black women's dominant laboring dress of aprons and head rags. And the time spent on beauty culture became moments of personal attention when so much of their lives got taken up by serving someone else. This focus on beauty as self-care and a way out of servitude helped showcase Madam Walker's product line in an increasingly crowded and dismissive market.

MADAM WALKER'S BEAUTY BUSINESS

From the beginning, Walker was conscious of the stigma that conflated all Black beauty culture with hair straightening and skin bleaching. Her earliest ad campaign argued that her product "Makes Short Hair Long and Cures Dandruff." These ads used a photo of Walker herself as a migrant woman who came from the washtub and had ascended to business success.

By 1910, Walker had settled down in Indianapolis, Indiana. The mail-order business for her "Madam Walker's Wonderful Hair Grower" product had done well, and Indianapolis had become the perfect strategic location for unmatched growth. Called the Crossroads of America, the city was centrally located for both receiving and sending orders. Moreover, African Americans made up 9% of the city. A growing Black class of professionals could bolster Walker's ambitions. Taking advantage of the city's cheap land, Walker went on to build a three-story office and manufacturing facility that helped reduce costs while serving as a symbol of Black pride.

With her foundation in place, Walker focused on her real power: her vast network of beauty culturists and agents. One of Walker's most popular ads screamed to the audience, "Learn to Grow Hair and Make Money." By helping to elevate beauty culture to a profession, Walker turned Black women into a loyal army of culturists—today called beauticians—agents, and clerks. Walker agent Maggie Wilson stated that beauty culture "made it possible for thousands of women to give up the washtub, the cook kitchen, the scrub work and the drudgery that was the only way for them to make a living."

At the apex of her success, Madam Walker upheld a beauty culture business with distribution throughout North and South America. She put her money behind mainstream groups like the NAACP and Black nationalist organizations, including the UNIA. Most importantly, Walker featured her unapologetic story as a migrant washerwoman to build a new pathway to the modern world for generations of Black women.

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3

Racial Violence in Migrant Cities

Chicago is considered the worst locus of what civil rights activist and author James Weldon Johnson would call the Red Summer of 1919. The race rioting that started in Chicago extended to more than 20 other locations across the country and as far as Liverpool, England. The attacks encapsulated a long-simmering turmoil of White frustrations with a growing Black presence that had come to a boil. The racial violence of 1919 was like a scarlet shadow that expressed itself in constant skirmishes, transforming migration destination cities. This violence was used to create physical boundaries in Chicago, which were later solidified through formal policies of residential segregation. However, as you will learn in this lecture, it also sparked new migrant-led visions of Black resistance and political consciousness that continue to shape the present.

THE START OF THE RED SUMMER

On one of the hottest days in July 1919, thousands of Chicagoans sought relief from the brutal heat on the shores of Lake Michigan. Eugene Williams, a 17-year-old Black teenager, joined his friends at the 29th Street Beach. They built a makeshift raft to float on this inlet of Lake Michigan, but Williams accidentally floated across the imaginary color line and into "White water."

Indignant White beachgoers went from peaceful sunbathing to racial outrage at the site of Williams's transgression. Whites began to throw rocks at the makeshift raft. A rock struck Williams, and he fell off the raft and drowned.

The police refused to arrest the White man who had been seen striking the fatal blow. Frustrated African Americans were attacked by White beachgoers, with the police looking on. Then White adults and children vandalized and looted nearby Black homes with the support of police. White youth marauded through Black areas firing weapons from cars. The police exerted unjust stop and seizure practices on citizens for the crime of being Black—both in White neighborhoods and even inside their own communities.

The attack lasted from July 27 to August 2. Thirty-eight people died (23 African American and 15 White). Two-thirds of those injured were Black. At least 1,000 people lost their homes as a result of the vandalism and destruction.

THE FIRST RACE RIOTS

Just 9 years earlier, the Fourth of July had found Black communities across the country exploding into an outburst of race pride and defiance because of a particular news item coming out of Reno, Nevada—Chicago migrant and boxing great Jack Johnson had just defeated the so-called Great White Hope Jim Jeffries to retain the heavyweight championship title.

White reactions to the revelry in Black communities were swift, setting off arguably the first ever nationwide race riots in US history. African Americans were celebrating the boxing victory, but they were also pushing back against Jim Crow racism in both the urban North and South. When White residents and soldiers tried to extinguish the fiery celebrations, Black people took up arms to fight back.

The desire of Whites for Black deference and humility was at the heart of these riots. And just as Whites brandished guns in White neighborhoods to contain Black celebrations, city politicians were enacting racial violence by other means. In 1911, vice commissions in both New York and Chicago discovered that their cities' red-light districts had been intentionally rezoned into Black neighborhoods. The police helped White ethnic organized crime turn Black communities into profitable good-time zones to serve the entire city.

As the nation moved into the second decade of the 20th century, acts of sexual violence, assault, and even murder against African Americans had become ubiquitous. The massive race riots that rocked this period in history were simply more spectacular versions of daily Black experiences with terror.

WHITE RESENTMENT

On July 28, 1917, more than 10,000 Black women and children walked under the NAACP flag in a silent march down Fifth Avenue in New York City. They were mourning the race riots in East St. Louis, Illinois, earlier that month. Blood ran down the streets of this small industrial town when Black workers were brought in to replace White laborers on strike. White residents ran through the Black community indiscriminately stabbing, clubbing, and hanging people. Approximately 6,000 Black people were driven from their homes, and 40 African Americans were killed.

This horrific riot foreshadowed the Red Summer of 1919. At least three dozen major riots and White mob actions rocked the nation that summer—from rural Arkansas to the nation's capital. In such violent incursions, racism and class anxiety could not be separated.

A postwar economic slump had brought increased competition for quality jobs and housing. In reality, racial discrimination barred African Americans from even threatening these resources. But the growing presence of Black urbanites stoked the fires of racial resentment as Whites fought among themselves for declining resources. The year 1919 was also a critical one for workers and the demand for better labor conditions in the dehumanizing bowels of America's factories. Over one-fifth of the nation's workforce participated in strikes that year. Again, because of the racism embedded within organized labor, the only avenue for most African Americans to gain access to factory work was to enter as strikebreakers. Racial tensions grew.

On May 31, 1921, White mobs attacked the Black community in the Greenwood neighborhood of Tulsa, Oklahoma. This nationally recognized business district and residential area was often referred to as Black Wall Street. The 2 days of violent attacks by White mobs in Tulsa resulted in the deaths of an estimated 300 African Americans. The mobs destroyed the Greenwood District itself and displaced thousands of people who lived and worked there. White aggressors even used an airplane to carry out the first aerial firebombing of a US city.

Research performed after the Chicago race riots found that 58 homes in the Chicago area were bombed between July 1917 and March 1921. Most of the victims of these bombings were South Side Black people who had moved into White neighborhoods. The real estate agents, both Black and White, who sold homes to them were also targeted. These firebombings demonstrated how violence was the most visible effort to set physical boundaries during the Great Migration.

ZONING AND COVENANTS

In the period between 1908 and 1910, the University of Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood instituted an anti-Negro drive. This included mass rallies, the intimidation of Black potential homebuyers, the blacklisting of realtors, and the boycotting of merchants who sold goods to prospective Black homeowners.

Baltimore was also facing its own struggles with race relations as Black migrants entered the city. In response, White residents adopted a formal plan of residential segregation. This ultimately became the 1910 racial zoning law—the first of its kind in the country. This citywide zoning ordinance prevented any Negro from living in a majority White block. It also kept White residents from living in any majority Black block. This ordinance set racial disparities in land value, inherited wealth, and city resources that can still be felt to this day.

The 1917 Supreme Court case of *Buchanan v. Warley* found that this ordinance violated the Fourteenth Amendment, which protects freedom of contract for private individuals. In response, White homeowners and builders focused on deed restrictions covering private homes. The Chicago Real Estate Board was the first in the nation to expel any member who rented or sold property on a White block to Black people. Without any evidence, they argued that Black residents were a threat to property values.

In the 1920s, sociologists at the University of Chicago used their pseudoscientific theory of human ecology to argue that racial segregation in cities was a product of nature. The National Association of Real Estate Boards' official 1924 Code of Ethics deemed it professionally unethical to introduce racial difference into a neighborhood. Then Chicago realtors called on lawyer Nathan William MacChesney to draft the standard format for the racially restrictive covenant. Covenants were legally binding agreements—usually between White homeowners and neighborhood associations—not to rent, sell, or lease to African Americans.

Even venerated institutions underwrote restrictive covenants; for example, the University of Chicago helped fund the notorious Hyde Park and Kenwood neighborhood associations. These areas helped buffer the larger property holdings of the university from a growing Black community to the near northwest. Such racist property arrangements generated a significant level of wealth for White residents, who could make more money by selling to Black residents who had limited housing choices. Ultimately, the housing stock left to Black residents was in some of the most dilapidated neighborhoods in Northern cities. With the force of racial violence and racist real estate agreements, landlords could extract the highest rents for the worst housing from the most economically disenfranchised population.

AFTERMATH OF THE RIOTS

Racial repression and despair are not the only legacies of the long Red Summer. This moment also served as fertile ground for a vibrant Black political consciousness. Powerful photographs show Black crowds in Chicago's streets congregating in front of Jesse Binga's Black-owned bank during the height of the 1919 riots. These visual displays make it clear that Black people fought back when Whites attacked on that fateful day in July.

In the months after the riots, the Black men, women, and children who fought back became symbols of an emerging political consciousness, described with the militant moniker of New Negroes. Press accounts and cartoons reveal how the Red Summer of 1919 birthed the New Negro as a Black entrepreneur fighting back against the ravages of racial violence in all its forms.

The year 1919 also gave birth to independent Black periodicals, organizations, and industries that sought to make the spirit of the New Negro real. For example, independent Black filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's photo play *Within Our Gates* served as a direct response to D. W. Griffith's racist melodrama *The Birth of a Nation*.

In October 1919, Illinois governor Frank Lowden formed a committee to investigate Chicago's race riots. Black social scientist Charles S. Johnson carried out almost all of the work. In 672 pages of statistical data and fieldwork, his 1992 report explored the backdrop of events, the riots themselves, and their aftermath. Johnson highlighted the color bar on jobs. He detailed the residential segregation of Black neighborhoods filled with high rents and low-quality housing, and he chronicled the various forms of violence used to hold the color line in the city. His fieldwork also included a meticulous accounting of derogatory newspaper images of African Americans and candid interviews with Whites about their attitudes on race. To Johnson, the racial violence was clearly a response to the city's transformation in the midst of the Great Migration.

However, in the tense climate of postriot politics, the obvious solution was not the best answer. The study was filled with details about the racist conditions of labor, housing, and policing, but the report recommended "better understanding" and more accurate reporting as adequate solutions

for improving race relations. The idea was that racism was a product of misunderstanding and not political intent. Unfortunately, the events of 1919 set the stage for future riots. But the moment also left African Americans with a legacy of resistance as part of the long struggle for freedom in what are still America's migrant cities.

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4

How Chicago Became the Black Metropolis

The Great Migration pulled thousands of Black migrants to the South Side of Chicago. It had forced a creative reimagining of what it meant to be Black in the new, but still limited, possibilities the city offered. The community that now called its neighborhood Bronzeville rather than the *Black Belt* was powered by a people no longer answering to "Negro." Following the lead of *Chicago Defender* editor Robert Abbott, they were now known as "the race." And the race pushed forward a vision of Black cultural and economic self-determination that converged on the Stroll. This neighborhood was the community's commercial and amusement district. It became a Black public square of race newspapers, records, films, league baseball, and artistry, with a history powered by race men and women. As you will see in this lecture, Chicago's South Side was the Black metropolis where people were always aspiring for something greater.

PAINTING A PICTURE OF CHICAGO

Chicago wasn't always the home of the Black Metropolis, but it has always been a city of migrants. By the late 19th century, this manufacturing hub needed more workers to man the machines of industrialized mass production. In 1890, 14,000 of the city's 1 million residents were Black. By 1910, that number rose to 44,000 Black residents, who lived throughout the city. At the time, no more than a dozen blocks on the city's South Side were exclusively Negro.

Journalist and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells was an early arrival to Chicago. Once there, she joined a small group of educated African Americans who had come to the city for the grand international World's Fair in 1893. A young Robert Abbott came to the fair on tour with the Hampton Choir and Quartet. After hearing Frederick Douglass speak, he vowed to do something that would help his race. He earned a law degree from Chicago's Kent College and eventually saw the possibilities of a growing Black community in Chicago. This led him to start the most important Black newspaper of the first half of the 20th century: the *Chicago Defender*. Over the next few decades, the newspaper would take on a role as the journalistic steward of migrants to Chicago.

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893.

Harlem has long been heralded as the center of early 20th-century Black urban life, but in the words of everyday migrants: "The mecca was Chicago." The city was at the center of US industrial production and consumption, but overcrowded and crumbling tenements offered inadequate housing to immigrant workers, who grew increasingly frustrated by 100-hour work weeks. As a result, they joined a growing wave of labor protests. Newly arrived African Americans saw these Chicago struggles as an opportunity. They had turned their backs on Southern Jim Crow injustice only to run face-first into what author Richard Wright would later describe as Northern "indifference."

Black laborers replaced striking immigrants at stockyards and steel mills and were called "[n-word] scabs" for it. Still, in Chicago, they could hold their heads high on the way to voting booths in their 2nd Ward. As promised in the *Defender*, they sent their children to Wendell Phillips High School, which offered modern facilities, integrated classes, and night school programs. By 1920, the school's curriculum included courses on Negro history and literature.

By 1915, more than 1.5 million African Americans had made the Great Migration to the North. These numbers crowded the so-called *Black Belt* to its breaking point. The population of this tiny area on Chicago's South Side exploded from about 44,000 to more than 233,000 between 1910 and 1930. White resistance to a growing Black population restricted the *Black Belt*'s expansion just a few city blocks to the west and east. Between racial zoning practices, restrictive covenants, and racial violence, the Black community was almost completely contained.

This urban segregation gave rise to overcrowded housing in the Black community and a rapid increase in so-called kitchenettes. These were older homes or large apartments abandoned by Chicago's White residents that had now been divided up into single-room apartments with a communal bath and were rented without a lease or, ironically, a kitchen. By 1919, the *Black Belt* was suffering a housing shortage while there was abundant surplus in other parts of the city.

The forces of urban segregation left the impression that Chicago's Black population was an undifferentiated racial mass. However, underneath the shroud of constraint existed a dynamic community with preexisting networks and cultural codes. The differences within the Black community became even more heightened as a small leadership class pushed to both work

with and distinguish themselves from new migrants. The Stroll became a central staging ground for building racial unity. It also served as a critical battleground over the changing meaning of Black Chicago.

OLD SETTLER INSTITUTIONS

The old settlers, who described themselves as the "better class," used the daytime Stroll to display what they considered to be the uplifting and respectable institutions of the community. The most enterprising among them aimed to transform segregated blocks into a united coalition of voters, patrons, and consumers. At the same time, the physical structure of the Black community forced them, in their words, "to live with those of their color who [we]re shiftless, dissolute and immoral." After the race riots of 1919, many old settlers argued that the vulgar behaviors and Southern ways these new migrants brought with them were the instigators of racial tensions and violence.

Various old settler institutions and organizations stepped to the fore and dispelled the pervasive myth that the race was without merit. Black clubwomen's organizations compensated for the exclusion of newcomers by Chicago's mainstream lodging homes and social agencies. They eventually consolidated their activities into the powerful Colored Women's Conference of Chicago. These clubs organized programs for new migrants at places like the Wendell Phillips Settlement. The programs offered settlement assistance, including childcare and educational and domestic arts facilities.

In Chicago's dynamic and diverse Black sacred realm, churches embodied a wide range of social positions based on each parish's specific form of worship and their relationship to the community. Many old-line churches offered spiritual counsel along with industry-sponsored programs of social adjustment that would attract migrants looking for assistance. They also offered status as deacons or mothers of the church for those desiring social mobility. Many churches provided youth clubs, athletic leagues, and literary societies to provide fun activities and reform migrant behaviors. Churches also presented a decorous service to discipline souls and combat the more boisterous migrant worship practices that seemed to remind old settlers of the South.

As more Black migrants arrived, organizations like the YMCA, the NAACP, and the Urban League also used their resources toward the reform of leisure spaces and behaviors. They aimed to protect efficient Black laborers from the "cultural disorganization" of migrant life. In 1915, Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in the basement of the Wabash Avenue YMCA. It offered positive and fact-based representations of the race with its Negro History Week, later known as Black History Month.

The Chicago Urban League was the most comprehensive, far-reaching, and well-funded old settler organization. It sought employment for both the Black working class and Black professionals in the city. Its strong job referral system, pro-union stance, and race-first advocacy were important to the growing community. The League also published instructional cards and dos and don'ts lists in the *Defender*, warning migrants "not [to] carry on loud conversations in street cars and public places," among other things.

THE BLACK METROPOLIS

The South Side's complex network of newspapers and periodicals was perhaps the city's most dynamic recorder of Black life. Up until the turn of the 20th century, the politically democratic *Broad Ax* had joined the *Chicago Conservator* as the voice of Chicago's abolitionist tradition. However, from around 1900—and particularly after the bloody summer of 1919—the dominant vision of the community shifted from radical integration to an aggressive belief in independent Black institutions. This new focus capitalized on the growing migrant population and helped soften the blows of residential segregation and political disenfranchisement.

Newsletters and brochures for Oscar Brown's Black Chamber of Commerce and its Sustain Black Business campaign retold the story of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable. This Black man was Chicago's first non-Indian settler and trader, and Black residents pointed to him as evidence of their inherited right to enterprise in the city. Institutional Black landmarks, including Provident Hospital, became physical symbols of Black business success and equality. Furthermore, journalists celebrated and exaggerated the productive successes of, for example, Robert Abbott's *Defender*. There was also Claude Barnett's

Associated Negro Press, a national news clearinghouse modeled on the Associated Press. These institutions and the boom in Black-owned insurance companies symbolized manly, entrepreneurial race pride and served as instructional guides for migrants to emulate.

The city hosted the middle-class Overton-sponsored *Half-Century* magazine (later the weekly *Chicago Bee*) alongside the economic radicalism of *The Chicago Whip*. The *Half-Century* fought to secure a more conservative readership by instructing migrants on respectable consumption habits. The *Whip* supported the organization of consumers into the "Don't Spend Your Money Where You Can't Work" boycott campaign in 1929, which became a national movement.

The *Defender*'s sensationalist and militant coverage of local and national politics was literally on the same page as ads for love potions, dream books, race records, and beauty systems. This combination brought Abbott a larger consumer base while offending both middle-class conservatives and economic radicals. The *Defender* served as the connective tissue between North and South during the Great Migration.

The nighttime Stroll of illicit "sporting" and entertainment helped transform the *Black Belt* into the Black Metropolis. On any given weekend night, the Stroll was packed with Black revelers and more than a few White observers and thrill-seekers. A veneer of freedom permeated the air as the shroud of subservience was lifted to reveal extravagant displays of fast talk, fine clothes, and feeling good.

Some revelers first ducked into the Monogram, the New Grand Theater, or the famed Pekin Theatre to catch a jazz set with a few moving pictures mixed in. The late 1920s drew nightlife farther south, to 47th and South Parkway, centered around the Savoy Ballroom and Regal Theater. Cinematic attractions shared the stage with sporting events and halftime jazz dances. All-star spectaculars transformed ballrooms, boxing rings, and baseball diamonds into a combination gambling refuge, political rally, or rave.

Stepping out of a show, spectators could quickly be converted into saints by wandering into "church on the street." Singing women evangelists packaged preaching, praying, and praising into a momentary haven of heaven on earth

with a blues backbeat. An almost identical soundtrack lured revelers into a nightcap visit to one of the all-you-can-eat enticements at a buffet flat or rent party.

Chicago's higher-paying industrial jobs certainly provided the disposable income for leisure activities. But the money spent on drinks in local dancehalls and put on lucky numbers at gambling stations was what recirculated within the community to support the dream of Black self-sufficiency.

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5

Harlem, the Mecca of the Great Migration

Harlem is described as the mecca of the Black experience worldwide. However, as much as people associate Harlem with Black history and culture, it was not originally a Black neighborhood. In 1910, Black residents formed just 10% of Harlem's population, but by 1930, they had become a 70% majority. How did this sleepy Dutch enclave become the most iconic pull drawing Black people to the North during the Great Migration? This lecture will take you on a tour of Harlem, beginning in the early 20th century. It will also introduce you to some of its most influential residents and show you how—and why—Harlem became such a magnetic force in the Great Migration.

BEFORE HARLEM

Black people had lived in the greater New York City area before Harlem was ever considered a possible Negro mecca. For example, Wall Street was originally a military fort designed to protect the activities of merchants and traders, including one of the most prominent slave markets in the country. This trade gave way to the infamous Five Points neighborhood, consisting primarily of emancipated Black people and working-class Irish.

By the turn of the 20th century, African Americans were being pushed further north on Manhattan Island to the midtown Tenderloin and San Juan Hill districts. The community that developed there had a profound impact on the eventual destination of Harlem. African Americans firmly established a solid institutional life and developed cultural innovations, with a mixture of churches, political clubs, and small businesses. The Tenderloin was home to the city's red-light district of drink, dance, sex work, and gambling. These entertainments gave life to the famed show business district of Broadway.

The early 20th-century Black community prospered and continued to pull Black people to New York City as part of the advanced guard of the Great Migration. But as working-class White ethnic immigrants fled further north, racial hostility kept African Americans from being able to follow.

THE FATHER OF COLORED HARLEM

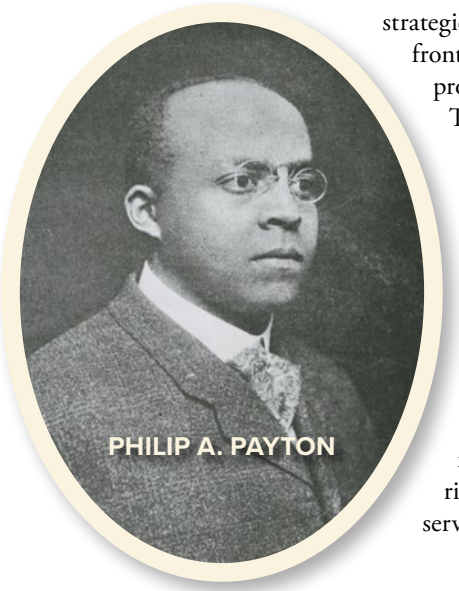
The idea of Harlem as the primary destination for Black people actually came from an unexpected failure. The Lenox Avenue subway line, which connected the densely populated areas of the island to Manhattan's upper hinterlands, opened in 1904. Many thought the subway would instigate a growing White middle-class desire to live and invest in Harlem.

Real estate speculators saw an opportunity, and aspiring moguls started buying up properties. They hoped that a growing demand would allow them to sell at a much greater profit. Land values skyrocketed as a result, raising housing costs out of proportion with the actual values. Owners used mortgages on one property to invest in other properties that were also inflated in value. Ultimately, the real estate bubble burst around 1905.

There were high levels of construction and yet still too many vacancies because of inflated rent prices. Eventually, property owners were forced to begin making vacancies available to Black people. Landlords also used the threat of selling to African Americans as an inducement to get more White neighbors to buy adjacent properties. Realtors even employed blockbusting, in which they staged a conspicuous Black person walking the neighborhood looking for vacancies. This caused Whites to panic and sell at reduced prices. Realtors could then rent or sell properties to Black clients at much higher rates.

White residents stayed resolute about keeping Harlem a White neighborhood, but to some extent, the battle had already been lost. Racist real estate policies had left Black people with a limited housing supply, so realtors had always been able to demand higher prices from Black residents, even in slum areas. The same thing happened in Harlem.

In 19051, at 31 West 133rd Street, White tenants were fleeing the building, at least partially instigated by a murder in one of the apartments. Desperate, the manager agreed to meet with Philip A. Payton, an enterprising young African American migrant. Payton filled the 133rd Street building with Black tenants willing to pay top dollar. From there, Payton's Afro-American Realty Company used various strategies, including paying a White front man to make deals with White property owners on his behalf. The business was also backed by the very rich Black undertaker James C. Thomas.


PHILIP A. PAYTON

Thomas sold his business in the Black midtown neighborhood for a significant profit to make way for Penn Station. Several Black institutions in the Tenderloin, from churches to cabarets, followed suit and relocated to Harlem with cash-rich reserves. Payton was happy to serve the growing Black clientele.

Between 1920 and 1930, 118,000 Whites left Harlem, and 87,000 Black people arrived. Payton helped create a pathway for Black migrants to settle in Harlem in the face of virulent White resistance. At the same time, he was also a profit-seeking businessman who saw dollars and cents in a segregated market. Black tenants complained that rents in his buildings were just as high as those of the exploitative White landowners.

Ultimately, Payton had a mixed record of racial advocacy and sheer greed. It may be poetic that the very impulse that opened the door for Payton also signaled his end. The Afro-American Realty Company closed its doors around 1908 because of overspeculation—Payton had purchased more properties than he could fill. Still, many call him the Father of Colored Harlem. Because of his influence, this once-backwater neighborhood would never be the same.

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

By the 1920s, Harlem housed some 200,000 Black people. In the face of racial segregation, the neighborhood stood as a battleground for equal rights in the White world. It also became a city within a city, with its own churches, ballrooms, and other Black-controlled businesses and establishments. These venues served as fertile ground for Black political organizing, intellectual debate, and creative expression. Harlemites combined Southern and Caribbean traditions with their new Northern experiences to cultivate a truly global sense of Harlemworld.

Roughly drawn, Harlem covers the area from 110th Street north to 155th Street, and from the Harlem River west to the Hudson River. Rowhouses and brownstones stood in the stylish Sugar Hill and Strivers' Row districts, where prominent Black residents lived. Everyone from scholar and activist W. E. B. Du Bois to organizer and writer James Weldon Johnson lived at the celebrated 409 Edgecombe Avenue address. The nearby Hotel Olga became a meeting ground for Black creatives from around the world during this period, now known as the Harlem Renaissance.

The magisterial Abyssinian Baptist Church presided over 10,000 members. Liberty Hall stood next door and formed the headquarters of the UNIA. To the east, the Renaissance Ballroom and Casino held concerts, political

rallies, and movie screenings. Mother Zion—the Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which is the oldest Black church in the state—stood to the south. The church was part of the "On to Harlem" movement after moving from midtown. Under the leadership of Dr. Benjamin Robeson, the Mother Zion community built its new home from scratch in 1925. The church hired George Foster, one of the first registered Black architects in the country, to design the building. These wealthier congregations also invested heavily in Harlem real estate. They were just as important as Payton in helping Harlem transition into a Black community.

Near Mother Zion, new migrants agitated to make Harlem Hospital a leader in training Black doctors and nurses. Artists and intellectuals circulated up and down Lenox Avenue between a series of key venues, including the 135th Street Public Library. This institution hosted art exhibits and literary gatherings, and it was the only branch to employ Black workers, including author Nella Larsen.

Alongside safe and affordable lodging, the Harlem YMCA was also known as the living room for the community and the renaissance. It served writers, Pullman porters, and Black youth seeking a new life in the city. A'Lelia Walker, the daughter of beauty mogul Madam C. J. Walker, brought together the Harlem arts world through Dark Tower parties at her lavish 136th Street townhouse.

Harlem's nightclubs and theaters served as their own showcase for the growing Black enclave. Swing Street held the most nightclubs, cabarets, and speakeasies in the city during Prohibition. It was also called Jungle Alley, in reference to the fact that large, mostly mafia-owned venues like the Plantation Club only allowed Black people through their doors as performers on the stage. Every jazz giant, from Jelly Roll Morton and Fats Waller to Louis Armstrong and Cab Calloway, further developed their musical styles on the Harlem stages. Blues great Bessie Smith proudly sang at the Lafayette Theatre, which challenged Jungle Alley's racial restrictions with a fully integrated two-story venue. And the legendary Small's Paradise was one of the few well-known Harlem nightclubs that was both integrated and owned by an African American.

Crowds from across the city also flocked all the way up to Hamilton Lodge, on 155th and Eighth Avenue. They witnessed the revelry and visual splendor of Harlem's drag balls, an overlooked piece of renaissance history and LGBT culture.

HARSH REALITIES OF HARLEM

Despite all the revelry and celebration of Harlem as a glamorous, almost fantasy world, it was always a neighborhood. The tidal wave of migration after World War I raised the demand for housing in a period of low residential building growth. Residential segregation pushed migrants into some of the worst housing in the city, and Black communities were the last priority for new construction after the war.

Migrants were often packed into buildings with no running hot water; most were heated only by stoves. Multiple families often shared a sink placed between rooms, and electrical connections might only get installed for an additional fee per month. Since there was such a high demand for Black vacancies, landlords could defer maintenance, garbage removal, and rodent control. These conditions created a litany of health hazards. On average, Harlem tenants paid $8 a month more for a three-bedroom apartment than other New York City tenants.

Harlemites were forced to pay these high rents while making the lowest wages. New York was filled with small neighborhood workshops in trades like publishing, printing, clothing, and shipping. Harlemites were excluded from these well-paying jobs, which were located in White ethnic communities and controlled by contractors and labor unions serving the same ethnic groups. Black men largely worked as janitors, waiters, chauffeurs, elevator operators, and longshoremen. Women continued to work as domestics or maybe in the garment industry and laundries.

Harlemites would rent out portions of rooms—sometimes even a bathtub—to make ends meet. Migrants had to take advantage of the "hot bed system." As soon as someone went to work, another person coming off work shared the same bed. Perhaps the most well-known strategy for grappling with this new Harlem was the famed rent party. For a quarter, revelers gained admission, a

plate filled with Southern delicacies like chitterlings, maybe some homemade liquor, and the chance to dance all night long. Some of the jazz and blues greats either got their start or supplemented their income playing at rent parties. But with fair wages and affordable housing, would these parties have even existed?

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6

The New Negro and the Harlem Renaissance

The Harlem Renaissance is commonly understood as the dynamic flowering of Black literature, art, and ideas sparked by the Great Migration and ending with the Great Depression. But as poet Sterling Brown said, the arts and culture of Harlem during this time were merely the “show-window, the cashier’s till” for a much broader racial awakening—the New Negro movement. In this lecture, you will learn that the more well-known literary and visual arts associated with Harlem were part of a wider range of social movements, popular culture, and political agitation that spanned from New York to the rest of the world. And the Great Migration was central to it all.

THE NEW NEGRO MOVEMENT

The term New Negro goes as far back as the era of chattel slavery, when it described the enslaved who had just arrived in the Americas from Africa. But the notion of a New Negro movement is primarily associated with the period of profound Black resistance against the daily and violent inhumanity of Jim Crow at the turn of the 20th century. The Great Migration was one of the clearest markers of this resistance.

African Americans were leaving the US South in growing numbers while facing new forms of racism in the North. Various forms of White resentment exploded into the nationwide race riots of 1919, and Black people fought back. Directly after the riots, the *Chicago Defender* spoke of the New Negro but said there wasn't anything new about this fighting spirit. Instead, the paper recognized "the same old tainted individual" who had been "awakened … with new desires, new hopes for the future."

The migration of Black Southerners was part of a shift in Black thinking that had global consequences. World War I gave artists, political agitators, and everyday people new ways to see the world. In the 20th century, workers' demands for a bigger piece of the pie were growing in European nations. How would corporate bosses improve labor conditions without reducing their profits? Black scholar activists W. E. B. Du Bois and Hubert Harrison said the answer lay in Africa. As different European capitalists reached further out to find other people and resources to exploit, they eventually faced off in Africa. This quest for new markets was one of the roots of World War I. The conditions of exploitation in Africa paralleled realities in the Jim Crow South, so the local conditions of migration were placed within a global story of economics and colonialism.

After World War I's end, several non-White organizations wanted to join the Treaty of Versailles meetings to put their grievances on the table of what became the League of Nations. An attempt to add a 15th point declaring racial equality to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points blueprint failed. But members of the world's so-called darker races used stage show, sermon, and social protest to highlight the hypocrisy of Wilson's speech. The US president was calling for worldwide self-determination while his government subjected African Americans to Jim Crow realities at home alongside US colonial interests abroad.

During the US occupation of Haiti, starting in 1915, some African Americans argued that America's relationship to Haiti was no different than the British Empire's relationship to Ireland and India. In short, the local became global. The US also revived a dehumanizing corvée labor system that shrunk the distance between the racist occupation of Haiti and the Jim Crow conditions that sparked the Great Migration in the first place.

But Black soldiers were also returning home from the European war front. They had been celebrated by the French and had a level of mobility and honor not experienced in the US. They had also talked with their Caribbean and African counterparts who were conscripted into the militaries of the European empires. In this moment, a working-class Pan-Africanism developed. Soldiers gained a worldly outlook of Blackness in the war trenches and the military kitchens, and they brought this worldview home.

NEGRO VOGUE

The Black resistance amid the race riots of 1919 was driven by soldiers and migrants, both coming to cities with new expectations and a new sense of their place in the world. The famed writer, scholar, and filmmaker Zora Neale Hurston was one such migrant. Born in the all-Black town of Eatonville, Florida, she was surrounded with Black achievement. She arrived at Howard University in Washington DC just as many colleges were being swept up in the growing New Negro racial consciousness. Black students were protesting their mistreatment at the hands of the White administrators and teachers who still controlled Black schools. Still, Howard helped cultivate young Hurston as a writer and scholar. After graduating, Hurston left Howard for New York. In the 1920s, while living in Harlem, she befriended the poets Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen at a time when the wider world was experiencing a growing interest in Black life and culture.

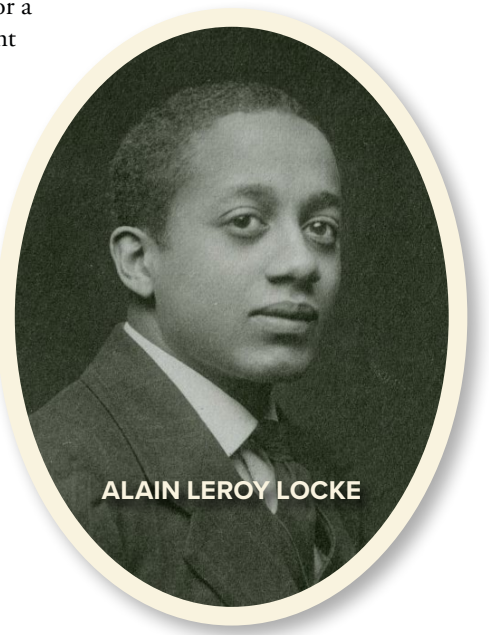
During World War I, a younger generation of White Americans had witnessed White-on-White violence on a global stage. The science and technology that marked Europe and the US as superior had now been used to bring forth global destruction. As an alternative, some turned to the cultures that—in their minds—seemed untouched by the Western world, especially Africa. They thought that a premodern African culture of vitality, spirit, rhythm, and communalism could also be found in Black American communities.

As a result, Black work songs, jazz clubs, and storefront churches were seen as the embodiment of a so-called primitive and exotic African spirit that had not been diluted or sullied by White Western over-civilization. A segment of White artists and intellectuals celebrated a unique Black culture. However, they believed it had to be harnessed, controlled, and uplifted through the Western forms of the canvas in art, compositional notation in music, and the written verse of poetry and prose. In short, the Negro became en vogue as a sort of release valve from the constraints of White society. But this celebration represented a racist fascination with Black people as a primitive and exotic curio of revitalization for White culture.

White bohemians and hipsters flocked to Harlem and Chicago's South Side to revel in Black performances that seemed so different from their daily lives. For Black writers and artists, such constrained support was still an opportunity to live a life beyond the drudgery of the factory floor or the kitchen. A legion of Black artists and intellectuals recognized the "Negro vogue" as one of the few opportunities to work in the cultural realm and transform it into a vehicle for individual profit and perhaps even a space of race pride and politics.

THE NEW NEGRO

Out of this vogue, the literature and art of the Harlem Renaissance became the signature showpiece of New Negro culture. The edited collection *The New Negro: An Interpretation* became its "definitive bible." This auspicious collection emerged when White patrons and Black artists came together for a 1924 Civic Club dinner. The event was organized to celebrate the publication of *Crisis* editor Jessie Fauset's first novel, *There Is Confusion*. However, Howard University professor Alain LeRoy Locke stole the show and captured the attention of *Survey* magazine editor Paul Kellogg. Not even a year later, the journal released an arts-focused special issue, *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro*, edited by Locke. That same year, Locke expanded the journal issue into the landmark anthology *The New Negro*.


ALAIN LEROY LOCKE

From the start, *The New Negro* collection announced the rebirth or renaissance as a racial awakening. It explicitly propped up cultural expression as an essential vehicle for pushing past what Locke called "the watch and guard of statistics." Based on past White interactions with Black life, the Negro had become "a chronic patient for the sociological clinic, the sick man of American democracy." Locke argued that showcasing arts and letters would show the world how Black people expressed themselves outside of the caricatures found in social scientific studies or on the minstrel stage.

Locke brought together a range of literary styles under one umbrella. This included the work of Jean Toomer—who resented even being called a Negro. There was also the genteel poetry of Countee Cullen and Georgia Douglas Johnson, alongside Langston Hughes's more explicitly blues-themed and folklore-inspired musings. Social science contributions included the intellectual debate between anthropologist Melville Herskovits and sociologist E. Franklin Frazier. The former argued that Black Americans retained certain cultural elements from Africa; the latter countered that the Negro was culturally American. W. E. B. Du Bois's contribution offered a global view that situated Black life within the international resistance against European and US colonialism, and Zora Neale Hurston was able to get her prize-winning short story "Spunk" published in this important collection.

The New Negro helped set the tone for placing Black history and culture at the center of art practice. This new awareness also benefited young artists, whose work came to the attention of wealthy White patrons. Some dismissed Locke's focus on the arts, given the broader Black political world sitting just outside the doors of the art galleries and literary salons. But the damaging caricatures of Black life found in social science textbooks and on minstrel stages showcased that cultural representation was a central site of struggle.

Still, Locke's particular framing of the collection revealed that he upheld a specific brand of New Negro arts and letters that could best guarantee appropriate contact between what he called "the more advanced and representative classes" of the races. Writer George Schuyler called Locke the "high priest of intellectual snobbocracy." Younger writers who had previously worked with Locke rebelled against his stance. Three of them—Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Wallace Thurman—helped create *Fire!!*

This journal allowed contributors to explore new and provocative ideas about sexuality and everyday Black life that had never been discussed in more respectable New Negro forums.

FIGHTING FOR COMMUNITY RIGHTS

New Negro life was never just a source of artistic inspiration. In this historical moment, Marcus Garvey's Black nationalist UNIA offered a special appeal to new migrants in the city just leaving a life of Jim Crow. With the clarion calls of "race first" and "Africa for the Africans," the UNIA's *Negro World* newspaper circulated a vision of Black independence and self-determination that the League of Nations promised but never delivered.

Throughout the streets of migrant cities, a diversity of periodicals and organizations united under some version of Black community, defiance, and justice. In Harlem alone, the Trade Union Committee for Organizing Negro Workers battled both racist employers and racist labor unions. The Harlem Tenants League fought for rent controls and the enforcement of sanitary codes. They also pushed for the election of Black politicians who would advocate on their behalf.

In 1928, Black newspapers *The New York Age* and *Amsterdam News* joined stepladder orators to instigate a campaign against police brutality. They admonished the use of violent "third-degree" tactics against Black people in custody and challenged the police department's "hands-off approach" in the face of White mob violence. The campaign even suggested Black armed self-defense if police wouldn't do their job.

This fight for what historian Shannon King calls community rights is a key part of the New Negro story. The explicit race consciousness was first captured by the migration itself. It then found expression in the museums and nightclubs, in literature and political agitation, and in the salons and saloons. Those who were swept up in this broad-ranging New Negro movement set the terms and initiated the debates about Black art, politics, and popular culture that Americans still wrestle with today.

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Blueswomen and Black Filmmakers Take the Stage

As early as 1910, the *Chicago Defender* was already issuing dire warnings about "a racial amusement problem"—the shocking offense of "Loud Talking at the Pekin." The Black-owned Pekin was a nationally famous Chicago theater that specifically catered to African Americans. Loud Talking revealed how "White folks" might use evidence of boisterous behavior to confirm racial stereotypes that helped justify segregated neighborhoods. It also foreshadowed future class conflicts between the old settlers and the largely working-class migrants. The finger of blame for this supposed issue was being pointed directly at newcomers at least 5 years before the Great Migration began transforming Northern cities. This injection of migrant culture into Northern life provoked both excitement and fear. But as you will see in this lesson, the integration of Black Southern style with Northern life would power a vibrant new popular culture.

MINSTREL SHOWS

The modern revolution in commercial sight and sound after World War I increasingly made mass-produced culture less expensive and more accessible to a wider variety of people and perspectives. American images and ideas about Black people, both real and imagined, largely shaped the contours of entertainment.

Blackface minstrelsy had already become one of the most popular forms of performance in America. Minstrelsy was a form of theater where mostly White performers used dark makeup to offer caricatured representations of Black life as a source of comedic entertainment. These stereotyped images of Black people focused on the happy plantation darky or the dandified "coon." The performers exhibited qualities of buffoonery, laziness, deception, and incompetence. They also staged caricatures of Black women as unattractive and manly. The underlining point of minstrelsy was a romance with the good ole days—when Black people were in their alleged natural habitat of slavery. A special lever for the comedic punchline was the supposed dysfunction of Black people when they were either freed from the constraints of plantation slavery or living in the big city.

As its popularity increased, blackface minstrel themes moved to song sheets, food labels, home goods, beauty advertisements, and even cartoons like Mickey Mouse and Bugs Bunny. They all used blackface imagery of a Black/before and White/after transformation to sell commercial products. This commodity racism relied on a marketing strategy of displaying Blackness as ugly, comedic, or dirty and suggesting that it could be resolved with the advertised products to reach the goal of beautiful, civilized, or clean Whiteness.

The various iterations of blackface minstrel culture would teach White residents how to interact with new migrants. Cities rezoned their vice districts directly within segregated Black communities, which reinforced ideas that Black culture was an expression of leisure, sex work, and other so-called deviant behaviors. Many African Americans of the respectable class denounced this movement of commercial amusements to Black communities.

At the same time, many migrants had just come from lives where they were only valued for their ability to perform backbreaking and dehumanizing manual labor. In the North, they were largely relegated to similar kinds of subservient work as domestics in White homes and service labor in factories. Working as chambermaids or bouncers for local brothels, or as performers on the blackface travel circuit, gave them the chance to forge a life somewhere between the plantation and the factory.

RACE RECORDS

Early music performers like Ma Rainey and W. C. Handy mentioned their travels on nationwide tours as early as 1902. On these tours between North and South, Black artists mixed vaudeville theatrical performance, blackface minstrel comedy, and tent show culture into an early version of the classic blues.

By 1910, vaudeville veteran Sherman H. Dudley began organizing what would become the Theater Owners Booking Association (TOBA). On this grueling tour circuit, iconic songsters like Rainey, Ethel Waters, and Bessie Smith developed their craft. As the technology of recorded sound developed, many of these Black musicians became the first artists to put their sound on wax, and so-called race music began to gain popularity. Mamie Smith's 1920 song "Crazy Blues" sold 75,000 copies to a majority Black audience in the first month, instigating a blues explosion.

After years of ignoring African Americans, the music industry scrambled to churn out recordings to satisfy this Black consumer demand, and companies like Paramount got rich off the race records market. On one level, marketing teams worked hard to capitalize on the world created by the Great Migration. Ads targeted to Black markets claimed the music could help African Americans in the North stay connected with their Southern roots. But marketing campaigns also confined blues queens to an Aunt Jemima style of minstrel dialect and plantation mammy images to prick the "good ole South" interests of White consumers.

However, the artistry of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith was anything but ole South or even downhome. Their stage shows, dress, and lyrics demonstrated a conscious artistry directly produced by the worlds brought together through the Great Migration. The blues queens embodied images of the New Negro renaissance, especially for Black women.

BESSIE SMITH

Nicknamed Empress of the Blues, Bessie Smith was the most popular singer of the 1920s and 1930s. She was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1894. Her parents died by the time she was only 9 years old, and she was forced to hit the streets singing and dancing for pennies. Smith eventually joined the TOBA circuit under the tutelage of Ma Rainey, and she ultimately became one of the major attractions.


BESSIE SMITH

As Smith's star rose, she took charge of her own band and payroll as a woman entrepreneur. Her performances offered a dazzling display of style, modern femininity, and even queer sexuality for the largely working-class Black fan base. Smith's brash displays of modern Black womanhood were circulated widely through the race records commercial market. Her lyrics burrowed deep beneath purely economic understandings for leaving the South to discuss the push of racial terror. They also explored taboo themes, from domestic violence to sexual desire.

However, the space of race records was never completely liberating for Black men or women. The largely White-controlled industry exploited Black artists and reaped most of the profits. Black Swan Records was one effort to take some power back for Black artists and entrepreneurs within the race records market. The company was founded by businessman Harry Pace in 1921 to explicitly produce a broad range of music by and for African Americans.

Pace sought to display Black musical talent, from blues and jazz to opera, classical, and concert spirituals. However, his emphasis on what he considered "serious music" revealed a class divide that kept Pace out of touch with the actual demands of the largely working-class base of Black consumers. Before Smith became the most important and bestselling artist of her time, she auditioned at Black Swan. Class distinctions played out when she was considered coarse, boisterous, and too Southern in contrast to the lighter, more refined and urbane style of blues sung by women on the label.

Although the migration to the North never eradicated the limits placed on a Black woman's life, it did provide new means by which to push the boundaries. Ultimately, race records provided a space where African Americans—particularly working-class Black people—could express a new racial consciousness alongside the writers, sculptors, and poets associated with the renaissance.

RACE FILMS

Black people also engaged with the new technology of moving pictures to develop an equally vibrant world of race films. The period after 1905 is generally identified as the vaudeville era of theater that coexisted with the nickelodeons of working-class ethnic immigrant neighborhoods. Nickelodeons—so called because the price of entry was a nickel—were one of the most popular forms of movie theater at the time. They were identified as being more class-, ethnic-, and community-specific because of their low cost, location, and the variety format of the entertainment they presented.

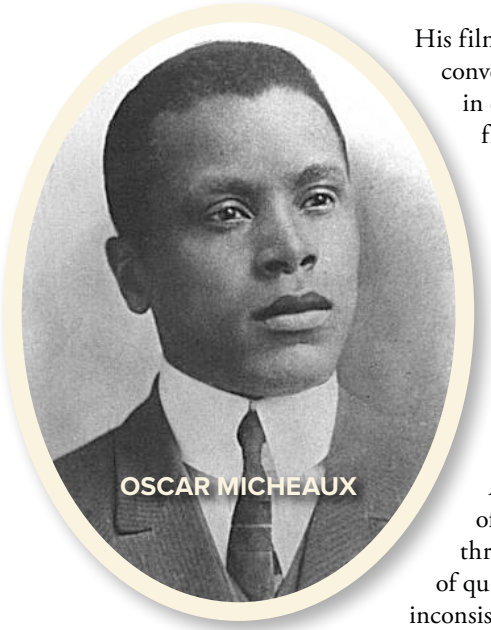
The exclusion of Black patrons from White ethnic nickelodeons forced Black people from all backgrounds to share the same vaudeville theaters. They were sites of both community building and class conflict. Places like Robert Motts's Pekin Theatre capitalized on the exclusion of Black consumers from Chicago's downtown White venues. The legacy of the Pekin as the first Black-owned modern theater was so expansive that venues all over the country took on the same name.

But a complicated push and pull existed between the ideas of Black theater as a pleasurable amusement and as a medium of racial uplift and moral reform. As old settlers and newcomers shared the same segregated theaters, these venues became sites of struggle over the production and consumption of Black leisure and racial identity. For African Americans of a certain class and demeanor, a restrained, dignified, and silent viewing of amusements offered the best challenge to racial stereotypes. However, for those who had just come from a restrictive Jim Crow life in the South, the theater space was a site of unrestricted expression.

The premiere of William Foster's two-reel comedy *The Railroad Porter* in 1913 made him the first Black motion picture producer in the country. During early screenings, Foster showcased a variety of moving pictures on the same bill, including his second comedy *The Butler* and a newsreel of a YMCA parade. His films were celebrated as showing "the better side of the race on canvas."

OSCAR MICHEAUX

Chicago filmmaker Oscar Micheaux was the most iconic and prolific figure of the race film industry. He produced more than 27 silent and 17 sound features. In his films, Micheaux sought to reform social vice and immorality by depicting the downfall of his characters as they struggled with various temptations in the dangerous city. He brought the thrills and attractions of Black vaudeville theater directly to the screen, while the moral stories served as a form of instruction.


OSCAR MICHEAUX

His films were shaped by the conventional narrative of heroines in distress saved by heroic male figures. However, Micheaux dressed this narrative with the race-specific themes of passing for White, interracial marriage, corrupt Black institutions, and racial violence expressed through lynchings and the Ku Klux Klan. These themes spoke directly to the lives of his largely migrant audiences. And he simulated the feeling of the migration experience through a disorienting technique of quick-shuffling backstories, inconsistent and jarring cuts, and internal dream sequences.

Clergymen protested his first film, *The Homesteader*, because of its depiction of a reverend character as a two-faced villain. But Micheaux turned the controversy into greater marketing buzz. He also took advantage of vaudeville networks to distribute films in theaters all along the routes of the Great Migration. Cities were apprehensive about his next film, *Within Our Gates*, because of its graphic depiction of Southern lynching. The projected 1920 release made members of Chicago's censor board worry that the film would "result in another race riot."

By the late 1930s, White companies increasingly began to see the profitability of both race records and race films. The co-opting of race entertainment by White studios made it difficult for Black production companies, which had less financial backing, to compete on a level playing field. Yet so many of the stylistic conventions and innovations seen today in pop music and Hollywood have their roots in this independent world of race records and race films.

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Jazz as the Music of the Migration

For Louis Armstrong and other Black musicians who migrated to the North, Chicago was an especially vibrant mecca that reflected the dreams of the urban North as a land of hope and possibility. Even in segregated Chicago, Black musicians found increased wages, innovative approaches to sound and showmanship, and new pathways to respect and dignity that may not have been possible in their Southern hometowns. However, as this lecture will uncover, they also faced new challenges—including racist treatment by White club owners, audiences, and producers. In addition, the artists had to deal with the Black elite's suspicions of anything associated with the "disreputable" world of jazz music.

JAZZ AND NEW ORLEANS

Jazz both reflected and fueled the propulsive movement that was the Great Migration. New Orleans was still recovering from the wounds of the Civil War, and the new world without slavery brought both hope and anger. The city responded with a virulent system of segregation and violence. To a significant degree, musicians found ways to better navigate the constraints imposed on New Orleans Black life by Jim Crow conditions.

In 1897, the City Council of New Orleans established an ordinance that legalized sex work within a regulated red-light district—and with prostitution came an increased demand for both alcohol and music. While this district, named Storyville, offered new jobs for musicians, it remained largely off-limits to African Americans. A separate Black red-light district also emerged, known as Back O'Town Blues. Here, Black musicians found work in saloons and dancehalls known as honky-tonks. Jazz emerged in these spaces, behind the veil of segregation.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG

In such places, Black musicians experimented with the tension between the standard European emphasis on the downbeat of one and three versus the syncopation of the two-and-four offbeat that became the staple of jazz. Syncopation came to embody an independent sense of expression, free from the White rules of life. Jazz music culture also developed its own language, with new technical terms like "riffs" alongside words like "gig" for job.

When Civil War marching bands exited the city, they supposedly left behind a large supply of musical instruments. Several local bands came from this legacy. While African Americans in New Orleans lived a life of second-class citizenship, they could regain at least momentary control over their lives through the culture that emerged around these brass bands. The parade that followed these bands was known as the second line. It was filled with everyday people dancing, singing, and using makeshift instruments to play off the rhythms set by musicians in the first line. It was a big deal for African Americans to momentarily take over the streets in this racially violent and segregated city.

As jazz grew in popularity, Black musicians in New Orleans developed their own benevolent societies and party networks to sidestep segregated access to job opportunities and performance venues. Musicians drew on local benevolent society traditions from the 18th century in which members received health care, insurance, burial, and educational services. In many ways, these societies became a way to create music unions in a city that was hostile to organized Black labor.

Black fish fries and lawn parties were other regular sources of employment for musicians. They helped to circulate dollars within the Black community at a time when property ownership remained largely for Whites only. Guests paid a small admission fee to dance and listen to music while eating home-cooked food and drinking alcohol. At these events, the band served as the major attraction. Musicians had to constantly raise the quality of their playing through signature styles and techniques to stay employed.

The combination of competition and camaraderie among Black musicians in New Orleans cultivated a dynamic brassy jazz sound that would gain a wider audience as migrants began to collectively quit the Jim Crow South.

When debating whether to stay or follow, the preexisting networks established in New Orleans were key. These networks helped carry not only the music but also the musicians into Northern cities, where they would transform the sound of American life.

THE PULL OF CHICAGO

Supposedly, when Storyville closed in 1917, musicians were pushed to the North. However, many of New Orleans's greats, including Jelly Roll Morton, Sidney Bechet, and Natty Dominique, had headed North even before this. Soon, these musical pioneers helped create a unique set of migration chains and networks that provided job referrals, train fares, and even places to stay to help younger musicians make the difficult decision to leave New Orleans. For example, if it wasn't for Joe "King" Oliver first going to Chicago in 1918, Louis Armstrong may never have become famous. Oliver kept urging Armstrong to leave New Orleans, and in 1922, Armstrong headed out.

No city had a stronger pull on jazz migrants than Chicago. Armstrong led a whole army of musical transplants, who all ended up on the city's segregated South Side. A combination of musical and economic factors helped turn Chicago into a melting pot for jazz and blues. Job opportunities increased, along with the number of Black-owned businesses and venues supported by policy gambling.

Black musicians were also drawn to Chicago's South Side because of a strong tradition of political organizing among their community. Given the premigration legacy of benevolent societies, it was hardly a coincidence that New Orleans transplants helped lead the formation of the Chicago Federation of Musicians Local 208. This branch of the union was created for Black musicians because Local 10 refused to admit African American members.

LOCAL 208

As a collective force, Local 208 quickly built enough leverage to force club owners to accept standard wage scales for its members. The branch's membership included Joe Oliver and Louis Armstrong, and between 1918 and

1929, it doubled in size, from 300 to 600 members. But while this powerful union established a strong political front for its members, it held very elitist standards for music reading proficiency and definitions of what it deemed "acceptable music." These standards placed the migrant sound of jazz directly in the crosshairs.

Local 208 member and bandleader Dave Peyton was a strong advocate for a unified Black musical front. However, when it came to styles of music, he specifically described jazz as "simply harmonic noise, void of theoretical thematic construction." He held particular disdain for Armstrong. In Peyton's own words, "This orchestra of Louis's is way out of gear. It is noisy, corrupt, contemptible, and displeasing to the ear. … Louis will learn in time to come, that noise isn't music."

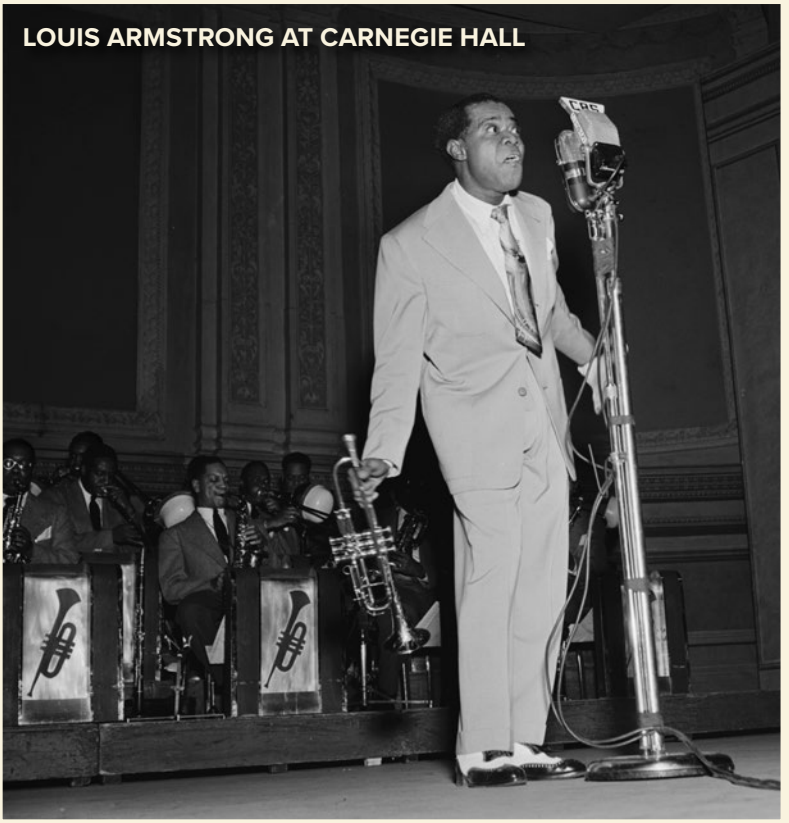
In the era of silent movies, film screenings were accompanied by live music from a pit orchestra. Many jazz musicians, including Armstrong, found motion picture orchestras to be a wonderful place to refine their skills and supplement their income on Chicago's Stroll. In a series of columns in the *Chicago Defender*, Peyton went on a rampage about musicians improvising on the sheet music. But these improvisational musical moments of standing out, or even parodying the standards, resonated with many migrants who were toiling away as anonymous cogs in the industrial wheels of Chicago's factories and kitchens. Such musical outbursts and disruptions allowed them to speak back to the dictates of the elite within their own communities, including Peyton.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG'S LEGACY

When Armstrong first moved to Chicago, he joined Joe Oliver's band, where Memphis transplant Lil Harden played the piano. She became Armstrong's second wife and also helped mentor him by sharing aspects of the formal training she received as a music major at Fisk University. Between his horn playing and the development of his scat-style singing, Armstrong established a firm departure from the New Orleans sound and forged a musical vocabulary that set the course for what people still understand as jazz today.

Oliver sensed Armstrong's growing authority, and Lil realized that Oliver had hired her husband for his band to keep the emerging king of jazz under wraps. In response, Armstrong packed up his bags and moved to New York at the height of the Harlem Renaissance. He was already celebrated by local musicians and artists, but he was hardly impressed with the Harlem sound. During his time with the top-ranked Fletcher Henderson band, Armstrong became frustrated with the more controlled jazz style popular in the city. However, even within these confines, his reputation as a virtuoso continued to spread throughout Harlem's vibrant nightlife.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG AT CARNEGIE HALL



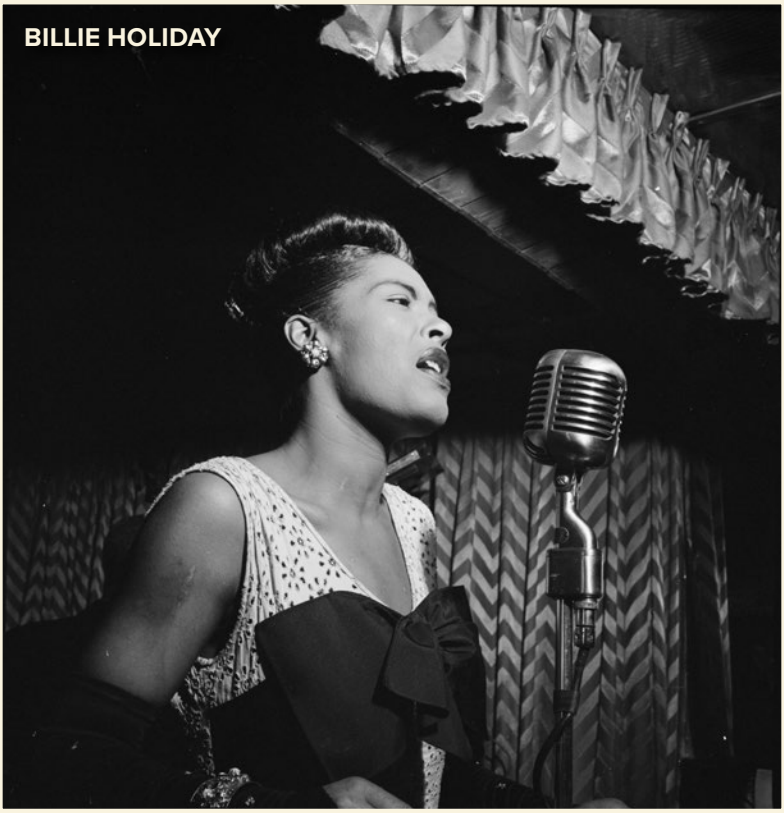

DUKE ELLINGTON

Up-and-comers split their lips trying to emulate Armstrong's propulsive sound and took note of his well-crafted stage persona. But as the Great Depression set in, the more piano-driven, symphonic sounds of Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Count Basie kept the record industry afloat and became the public face of jazz. In contrast to the Chicago hot style, these big bands relied on written arrangements that gave a greater role to the bandleader.

The big band was amplified by the stylings of star vocalists. In this period, Armstrong's ability to move from the horn to equally improvisational scat singing helped catapult him into a crossover celebrity in American popular music. His version of the Fats Waller song "Black and Blue" took on greater resonance during the 1930s with its haunting line "My only sin is my skin."

BILLIE HOLIDAY

During the Great Depression, everyone was poor, but Black people were also dealing with segregation and threats of violence, including lynching. Vocalists used the jazz technique of reinterpreting standard songs to express these nightmarish experiences of the American Dream in the form of song. There was no greater example of this jazz vocalist tradition than Harlem's Billie Holiday.



Holiday's early life started in Baltimore, where she first heard the records of Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith. By 1928, her mother had moved to Harlem, and Holiday joined her there a year later. Even as a teenager, it didn't take long for Holiday to start singing in the neighborhood's nightclubs. Over time, she developed a distinctive vocal style, inspired by jazz musicians.

When Holiday was hired by Artie Shaw, she became the first Black woman to work in a White orchestra. In 1939, her innovative vocals and racial consciousness powerfully converged on the song "Strange Fruit." The song was based on a poem written by Abel Meeropol, but the texture and emotional thrust were all Holiday.

With lynchings on the rise following the stock market crash, the Great Depression years amplified the sense of longing and despair festering in a society still governed by White supremacy. Holiday's vocal interpretation spoke to this moment. In the song, hanged Black bodies—the strange fruit—sway from trees in a gentle Southern breeze. Holiday's ethereal tone elicits the sense of both a dream and a nightmare.

The bravery and subtle allegory of "Strange Fruit" set the tone for more candid songs of racial critique, like Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam." Holiday's timely performance served as the vocal response to the musical callout of jazz artists on the move to the North, who were searching for freedom in the broadest sense.

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How Migrants Made Gospel Music

As the story goes, migrants carried the authentic downhome Southern Black church music with them on the migration trail to the North. However, in reality, the most well-known soundtrack of the Black church—gospel music—is young in its formation. With its powerful blend of sacred lyrics sung to an urban blues backbeat, preachers once considered the gospel sound scandalous and a threat to authority. In short, this music best captures the dynamic twists and turns of the Black migration experience in sacred form. In this lecture, you will see that as migrants carried their sacred songs along migration chains, they experimented with rhythmic variation and lyrical content to capture the sentiments of city life, class divides, Northern racism, and new forms of praise and worship.

INTRODUCING THOMAS ANDREW DORSEY

Today, Thomas Andrew Dorsey is known worldwide as the Father of Gospel Music. In his youth, however, Tom was swept up in the growing craze for blues and jazz music. His family moved from the small town of Villa Rica, Georgia, to Atlanta in 1908. He worked selling drinks at the Eighty-One Theater, a vaudeville house in the heart of Atlanta's Black business and nightlife district. In his downtime, he received some informal instruction on technique and composition from resident musician Ed Butler. Young Tom also got an education in Black musical performance by watching the top national acts touring through Atlanta, including blueswoman Ma Rainey.

Dorsey supplemented his musical education with lessons in classical piano from a teacher he knew as Mrs. Graves. He also played piano gigs at low-profile juke joints, brothels, and rent parties around town. In these venues, Dorsey learned to master an array of trills, embellishments, and changes on standard songs.

In 1916, he joined the Great Migration and headed to Chicago. Once there, he played in the wine room of the Kelly Garden cabaret. Wine rooms and buffet flats, which were frequented by migrants, provided employment for pianists who couldn't pass the music union standards. Being able to read music and play a certain catalog of songs helped musicians receive the sought-after union card. This opened the doors for them to compete for the higher-paying and higher-profile jobs in vaudevilles and ballrooms.

Migrants were driven by a constant desire to find a new home, a place that was Northern without destroying their Southern roots. This calling would profoundly shape not only individual migrants like Dorsey but also the slowly developing sonic force that eventually became gospel music.

LUCINDA MADDEN

Lucinda Madden was another migrant shaped by the desire for a new home. When she left Atlanta for Chicago, she immediately joined Olivet Baptist Church, a magisterial old-line Black church. Such churches had become the standard bearer of respectable worship. Various ministers believed that demonstrative forms of worship were too Southern and backward

or too similar to the blackface minstrel caricatures of African American life. Thus, most Black old-line churches had almost completely replaced any congregational singing, clapping, or dancing with a strict regimen of European classical music and religious hymns.

Black composers like Harry Burleigh and R. Nathaniel Dett began to create classically composed, notated, and arranged versions of old Negro spirituals. With deeply harmonic and flowing versions of "Deep River" or "Give Me Jesus," choir directors demanded round, smooth, blended voices without any allusions to rhythmic syncopation. The music served as a sonic reflection of the respectability and elevated status desired by those in both the old-line church leadership and in the pews. And many of those seeking a religious home were migrants.

One day, as Madden sat in the pews at Olivet Baptist listening to the service, she grew disgusted. Looking back on it, she couldn't "understand the pastor and the words he used." This experience pushed her to move on to the smaller Ebenezer Baptist Church. Ultimately, she joined other migrants in leaving the Baptist denomination altogether.

Madden joined the predominately White Pentecostal Stone Church. Then, under the new name Elder Lucy Smith, she eventually started her very own All Nations Pentecostal Church. Her church would play an instrumental role in the development and circulation of gospel music.

THE SANCTIFIED CHURCH MOVEMENT

Migrants developed their own modern form of worship with a demonstrative and expressive form of praise. The Sanctified church movement was a largely urban and migrant-driven form of modern Blackness, which offered a powerful worship alternative to the old-line churches. Instead of repressing bodily release, Sanctified and Pentecostal churches advocated using the body as a vessel for demonstrating one's faith. Members believed in a living God that filled worshippers. They called themselves saints, with spiritual power released through religious shouting, dancing, and signing.

This public and spirit-filled form of worship required a new kind of music. Those who were "saved" believed they could walk in the world without being of the world. Therefore, worldly things, including instruments and even popular styles of playing music, could be used as long as they brought out the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, a use of secular sounds with a message of salvation became instrumental in Sanctified churches, tent revivals, and even on street corners.

The Sanctified church believed that divine gifts could be possessed by anyone and did not require formal training. This religious approach created new spaces of leadership for the non-elite. Women, however, still confronted the standard religious opposition to female leadership that ran across all denominations. As a result, women in the Sanctified church became evangelists. They turned revivals and streets into places of leadership outside the watchful eye of the male-dominated church. These women became innovators by packaging singing, preaching, praying, and testimonials about what God had done in people's lives into a new kind of worship. This set the tone for a whole new music ministry—the precursor to gospel music.

Within the context of traveling revivals and street preaching, blind pianist Arizona Dranes became one of the most influential performers in Chicago. She incorporated a barrelhouse blues piano style with her ministry, and she used this showmanship to amplify her message of religious salvation. Such early musical evangelists in Sanctified churches are rarely recognized. However, their style and ministry set the tone for what would soon be called the gospel sound.

DORSEY AND GOSPEL MUSIC

The official tastemakers in Black communities continued to promote the genres of concert spirituals and syncopated jazz as respectable forms of music in the church and ballroom. Thomas Dorsey did gain some personal recognition as a professional musician; however, the rent party circuits and buffet flats did not give him the kind of economic stability and status he desired, and he began to consider the power of religious salvation. He suffered a debilitating nervous breakdown because of the disparity between his musical ambitions and his modest reality.

During his recovery, Dorsey attended the prestigious National Baptist Convention held at Chicago's Eighth Regiment Armory. This convention was a stronghold of old-line respectability, but some were concerned that the emphasis on classical music and concertized Negro spirituals had squelched the spiritual conviction of the church. That year, leaders allowed singing evangelist "Professor" W. M. Nix the chance to sing "I Do, Don't You." Nix came out from behind the pulpit and changed the tempo of the song, allowing him to stray from the text, embellish the melody, and give the song a different musical sentiment. The crowd was thrilled.

When Nix offered a "touch of the blue note" and raised the spirit in the church, Dorsey exclaimed, "That's where I outta be!" He started to toy with a bluesy kind of church music and even became musical director at a small Baptist church. Then the fame and opportunity of the secular music world finally came calling. The bluesy style of the rent party had finally reached the mainstream.

Record companies expanded their catalog of African American artists under the race music banner to include jazz, recorded sermons, concertized spirituals, singing evangelists, and now blues music. By 1924, Dorsey had been brought to Paramount Records to work as the musical director for Rainey's Wild Cats Jazz Band. But while working at Paramount, Dorsey also got a front row seat for the dehumanizing exploitation of Black musical talent.

An artist came to a recording session and was paid as if that recording were a single performance. Dorsey would create a notated composition on a song sheet after the session. The recording company used Dorsey's song sheet to secure the copyright for the recording, which meant the artist received little to no royalties when the record was sold. Dorsey started reconciling the internal conflict this caused by composing and publishing his first distinctly blues-inflected religious songs, "If You See My Savior" and "How about You." In these gospel songs, biblical references were replaced with first-person narratives, simple melodies, everyday language, and harmonies that people could anticipate. This style helped create a common experience of musical testimony.

As Dorsey moved further into gospel compositions, he explicitly chose musical "trills, turns, [and] movements" from rent party blues and revivals to make his gospel compositions attractive. While the concertized spirituals in the old-line church restricted singing to the choir, Dorsey's gospel songs structured a congregational call and response directly within his compositions—a voice for frustrated migrants like Lucinda Madden.

When old-line Protestant ministers heard this music and the way parishioners responded, all they thought was "sin music." The message was overlooked because of the sound. Dorsey argued that pastors didn't "want anyone encroaching on their territory." He had made a profound breakthrough in developing the music, but he couldn't get gospel past the preachers and out to the consumers.

GOSPEL MUSIC'S SPREAD

Because he had worked in race records, Dorsey thought it made sense to send out copies of his song sheets to churches. The song sheets contained the notes and lyrics but failed to convey all the improvisation and style that made Dorsey's compositions *gospel* songs.

The power of gospel music was found in the performances of artists like Mahalia Jackson, who had been thrown out of churches for her snake-hips style of performing. Once listeners recognized the gospel song through the singer's performance, Dorsey sold thousands of copies of the sheet music. The sound was especially popular in churches full of migrants who wanted to see themselves in their praise and worship.

Sallie Martin created the community gospel chorus, which sidestepped the churches and performed out in Black communities. Eventually, listeners pushed church leaders to accept the new sound. Sanctified radio programs also became a perfect venue for transmitting gospel music to a receptive audience.

By this time, Elder Lucy Smith's All Nations Pentecostal Church had become a massive Sanctified house. In 1933, Smith debuted her live worship radio program, *Glorious Church of the Air.* Alongside Smith's preaching, Sallie Martin and Mahalia Jackson also frequently appeared on the radio program, with Dorsey on piano. They debuted gospel staples like Dorsey's renowned classic "Take My Hand, Precious Lord."

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Negro League Baseball and Black Lotteries

In the summer of 1919, the Chicago American Giants baseball team was returning to Chicago after a successful cross-country tour. However, the all-Black team was unable to return to its home field because of the tumultuous race riots that rocked the city's South Side that summer. The Illinois National Guard was encamped at the Giants' Schorling Park. After this moment of exile from their own stadium, team owner Andrew Foster, feeling compelled to take action, helped to create the Negro National League. One of the hidden forces behind the league was its financial support from the illicit lottery system of policy gambling. As you will learn in this lecture, the integrated world of the Negro league and policy gambling went on to shape the most exciting aspects of both sport and business in ways still seen to this day.

ANDREW FOSTER

Before 1887, several amateur and professional leagues included Black players on majority White teams or all-Black teams within integrated leagues. Then, in 1887, both major and minor league teams adopted an informal gentleman's agreement that placed a ban on any new contracts for Black players.

Andrew "Rube" Foster came of age in the heart of baseball's Jim Crow world. He pitched for baseball's best teams, including the Cuban X-Giants. He also led the Philadelphia Giants to three consecutive victories in the Colored World Championships from 1903 to 1906.

In 1906, White owners of Black teams attempted to organize the National Association of Colored Baseball Clubs of the United States and Cuba. Part of their strategy for providing economic stability to the league was to limit player salaries by preventing players from jumping to higher-paying teams. But to the many Black workers who had been relegated to sharecropping, one of the central lures of professional baseball was the ability to negotiate their value in ways that were usually impossible.

Foster mobilized several star players and led them to the Midwest as an act of resistance against the constraints of the corporate league structure emerging on the East Coast. He also bolstered his own personal ambitions for better pay as the new player and manager of Chicago's Leland Giants. His victories included wins against both Black and White teams on unprecedented spring training tours in the South and West, and the team even ventured as far as Cuba. Then, taking advantage of this momentum, Foster broke away to form his own team, which became known as the Chicago American Giants by 1911.

Black leaders were critical of Foster's partnership with John Schorling, a White saloon keeper and son-in-law of Charles Comiskey, who leased the old White Sox stadium to the American Giants. But the lease on Schorling Park placed the American Giants directly within the Black community. Because this all-Black team had its own park, Foster could offer a consistent schedule of weekly play. This allowed him to revive an East-West Colored Championship against the New York Giants.

For the second decade of the 20th century, Foster's Giants were the most dominant Black squad—and some would say the best team in baseball. Foster emerged as the sport's premier manager. Ironically, he also embraced an autocratic demand to regulate player contracts and fine players for poor execution. But such behavior was overshadowed by the growing cabinet of trophies won by the Giants.

Foster extended his power by leasing out Schorling Park to other Black teams, and he placed allies in managerial positions for other teams. He even marshaled talent from his own team to help build out the Detroit Stars, which generated more entertaining competition outside of Chicago. These networks provided financial capital and community support for Foster as he began to lead the charge for the organization of a Negro league.

On February 13, 1920, Foster presided over an organizational meeting of team owners at the Paseo YMCA in Kansas City to discuss the possibility of creating a Negro league. In the meeting, his handpicked owner of the Detroit Stars quickly nominated Foster as president of this new baseball organization. Foster then "dumbfounded" the meeting by immediately pulling out an already established charter incorporated for a national Negro baseball league.

THE NEGRO NATIONAL LEAGUE

The Negro National League comprised some of the top teams in the Midwest, including the Indianapolis ABCs and the Kansas City Monarchs. It served as a direct expression of race pride and great baseball. Within 4 years, it expanded South, with teams in Birmingham, Alabama, and Memphis, Tennessee. A rival East Coast league formed in 1923 and poached players from the Negro National League. But within a year, they recognized the profits to be made from working together and arranged an even more successful Colored World Series between the champions of each league.

The Negro National League was a symbol of Black entrepreneurial success, with full stadiums and well-paid players. However, the teams were basically trapped within a booking system passed off as a league to benefit Foster's personal profits. As league president, he was given 10% of the receipts.

Meanwhile, most teams in the league had to pay a 20% leasing fee to play in parks they didn't own, where they had to fit around the schedule of the home teams.

Foster held leases at two of the primary league parks, one in Chicago and the other in Detroit, so most teams had to spend the majority of their season on the road to generate any real revenue. With this leverage, Foster refused to play many away games and kept his Giants at home, where he held the most financial control. When he died in 1930, all the power and knowledge of the Negro National League died with him. Another renaissance in Negro league baseball wouldn't come again until the mid-1930s.

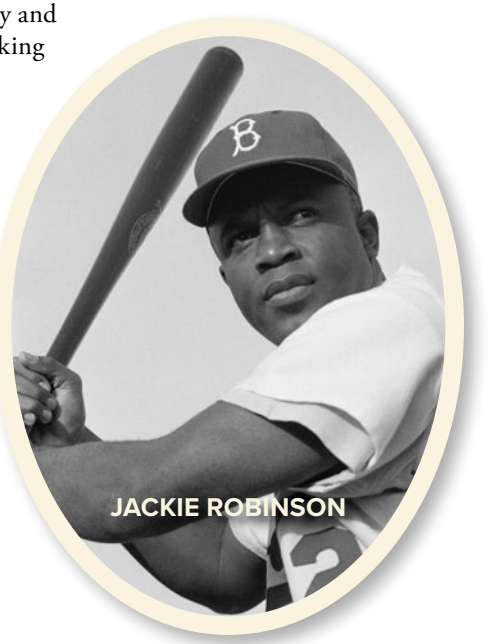
GUS GREENLEE

In the 1930s, the center of Black baseball power shifted to Pittsburgh under the leadership of businessman Gus Greenlee. As part of the Great Migration, Greenlee had left North Carolina and landed in Pittsburgh's Hill District in 1916. In 1931, he bought the Pittsburgh Crawfords baseball team. In his first year of ownership, Greenlee was outraged that his players weren't allowed to use the dressing rooms at White-owned or White-controlled ball parks. So, the following year, he built his own Greenlee Field—an impressive stadium that seated 7,500 fans. Of special note, the ballpark was designed by Pittsburgh's first Black architect, Louis Bellinger.

In 1933, Greenlee revived the Negro league, serving as its president. His economic vision and the stability it brought helped generate unprecedented innovations, both on the field and in the stands. During its best years, this second version of the Negro league organized the annual East-West Classic at the Chicago White Sox Comiskey Park. Negro league players were selected by fans through cutout ballots in the *Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier*. At a time of Black voter suppression and illegal voter redistricting, the chance to vote for players in an all-star game took on greater significance.

At Comiskey Park, fans witnessed the best players in baseball, all on one field. For example, Josh Gibson of the Homestead Grays was such a spectacular power hitter that some called him the Black Babe Ruth. And with Gibson hitting close to 800 home runs in his career, others even called Babe Ruth "the white Josh Gibson."

Today, people celebrate the dignity and talent of Jackie Robinson for breaking the color barrier. While Robinson was hardly the best Black player, he had endured the indignities of integrated life during his military service, so he was the best candidate to break the color line in baseball. The best Negro league players—who had been adored and celebrated—were not going to accept the kind of abuse that Robinson faced from White opponents, fans, and teammates in the major leagues. Therefore, the story of baseball's integration must be placed within this Negro league context.


JACKIE ROBINSON

THE POLICY ECONOMY

Black gamblers played a central role in creating an independent space for this superior brand of baseball. Professional sports are an expensive enterprise, and African Americans were systematically excluded from the mainstream financial industry. Ultimately, the unique underworld networks of Black policy gambling—or "the numbers"—made it possible to create significant Black businesses that could be independent of White control.

Games of chance or lottery go back to the American colonial period. With different rules, these games were variably called lotteries, policy insurance, and numbers. When bettors wagered on the individual numbers of their choosing, the dealer was considered to be selling insurance on the numbers. The sales slips were called an insurance policy. These games were eventually outlawed to make way for the stock exchange. But during the Great Migration, Black migrants from the Spanish- and English-speaking Caribbean and migrants from the US South brought their own unique cultures of chance to the urban North.

In cities, Black people were specifically excluded from the mainstream banking system. They faced low-paying jobs and squalid living conditions. Under such conditions, lotteries became rational economic responses. In the Midwest, gambling entrepreneurs created stations where the bets were placed. By the 1930s, almost 500 policy stations were reportedly dotted all over Chicago's Black neighborhood of Bronzeville. Various small businesses supplemented their income by serving as formal fronts for the stations. Customers carried drawings—the slips of paper on which the winning numbers were printed—and an army of runners moved between the community and stations after writing up bets for a 20% commission of the amount played. The drawings were public and happened at places known as wheels, which were scattered throughout the community in locations like old garages or even the woods of suburban areas.

There certainly were compelling reasons to be critical of policy. For example, the games preyed on poverty and could generate gambling addictions. But despite all this, the Great Depression compelled even the most suspicious critics to regard policy operators as race leaders at some level. At least with policy, a portion of the hard-earned nickels and dimes placed on bets were recirculated within the Black community.

The policy economy offered a relatively higher rate of return than the racially exclusive stock market game. Moreover, these gaming systems underwrote the legitimate cultural and entrepreneurial institutions in Black communities that couldn't get support from the White financial industry. In Chicago, a vibrant collage of policy kings underwrote the city's famed jazz and blues culture and sponsored politicians who mediated relations between city hall and the Black community. They also backed churches, newspapers, insurance companies, and baseball teams.

The Negro league—and so many other industries—wouldn't have been possible without this consistent infusion of capital generated from within the Black community. Everyone could see the lucrative nature of Black innovation created by this lottery system. So, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, White ethnic gangsters and politicians colluded to disrupt the business. They raided policy stations, threw Black moguls into jail, and seized territories for their own economic interest. Eventually, this Black economic system was seized by the biggest gangster of all: the US government.

In 1974, Illinois became the first state to create a legal lottery system. State representatives, like future Chicago mayor Harold Washington, knew where the state lottery had found its origins. He fought valiantly to legalize policy and return its control to the Black community where it had begun—but to no avail.

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The Depression Reshapes the Great Migration

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, African Americans shared in the nation's collective hunger for economic recovery. But Black people's economic conditions were already shaped by a different American hunger—one for equality and inclusion. The Depression certainly staved off the Great Migration's pull to places in the North, but the Jim Crow texture of economic despair still helped push almost half a million African Americans from the South in this moment. Their unique fight to get fed in the 1930s fueled a search for alternatives to a devastated capitalist system. As discussed in this lecture, this pursuit shaped the culture and politics of the nation and, increasingly, the world.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In 1927, a 19-year-old Richard Wright headed to Chicago from Mississippi, trying to work his way out of extreme poverty. He wanted to use writing as a way out of the stranglehold of Southern tradition and the crushing weight of Jim Crow oppression. Once in Chicago, Wright began working nights as a post office clerk while filling his days with time in the library refining his craft as a writer. Along the way, he met members of the UNIA. He admired the dignity that came with their "race first" outlook—a dignity he had never seen before in Black people. Soon, Wright heard Communist ideas about the impending fall of capitalism, but he didn't really listen. Yet, in 1929, the Communists were proven correct: The stock market crashed, and the Great Depression had hit.

The US national income fell from $81 billion in 1929 to $40 billion by 1932, and the nation's overall unemployment rate reached 25%. During the worst stages, African American unemployment was double the national average at a devastating 50%. At this time, between 80% and 90% of Black Americans still lived in the South. Prices for cotton—the mainstay Southern cash crop—plummeted, and Black farmers were reduced to starvation or kicked off the land entirely. They crowded into Southern cities, where they faced a different kind of misery.

White Southerners were now clamoring for jobs as domestic servants, bellboys, and garbage collectors, which they had previously dismissed as Negro work. They used terror tactics to get these jobs, forcing employers to fire Black workers and pressuring labor unions to keep their ranks segregated. The twin forces of unemployment and racial resentment put African Americans on the move, first to hobo villages—encampments that were often near railroads. Black Southerners transformed into hoboing migrants, hopping freight trains and heading to the North. However, even in the prosperous motor city of Detroit, Black jobless rates had hit an unthinkable high of 60%.

The Great Depression highlighted long-existing Black frustrations with economic disparities. Nobody faced these disparities more than Black women, who had long been relegated to domestic service and laundry work. The Depression made it difficult for even White families to afford domestic help. However, with migrants still flooding the city, Whites realized they could pay desperate Black women almost nothing for their labor. Times were so hard that some of these Black women had to accept the sexual advances of White husbands just to make a little extra money.

The Black church remained a refuge in these times of need, though it too experienced fundamental changes. As the migrant population grew, Holiness and Pentecostal storefront churches spoke to more Southern styles of worship that offered comfort in a moment of despair. And more unconventional faiths delivered a gospel of self-help on earth rather than salvation in heaven.

In Detroit, Elijah Poole became Elijah Muhammad—the leader of a small sect known as the Nation of Islam. The Nation gave African Americans a whole new worldview to make sense of their conditions in the heart of the

Depression, saying that Allah—in other words, God—was a Black man, that Black people were his chosen race, and that it was their responsibility to build heaven on earth. Over time, the Nation developed a network of temples, schools, and small businesses meant to ease the strain of poverty and build up a separate Black nation in what they called the wilderness of America.

THE NEW DEAL

The systemic crisis of the Great Depression demanded a structural response to feed the American hunger. President Roosevelt's bold new set of initiatives, known as the New Deal, offered hope because its economic approach promised to help everyone in need. However, Roosevelt did not want to alienate the Southern segregationists or White workers in his Democratic coalition. So the implementation of New Deal benefits was put in the hands of local authorities, which increased the racial disparities in wealth and income.

To be clear, the deal included important victories that benefited migrant communities. The Wagner Act gave workers the right to unionize, which improved wages and working conditions for Black workers. But there was no provision to protect Black workers from being excluded by labor unions. The Civilian Conservation Corps hired Black men in racially segregated work camps that made the difference between urban poverty and starvation.

The more radical Social Security Act planted the seeds for a social safety net of unemployment benefits and retirement insurance, but it excluded domestic and farm work—jobs that African Americans were most likely to have. The most explicitly racist New Deal practices fell under the Federal Housing Administration, which guaranteed low-interest and long-term mortgages that made homeownership much more affordable. However, it also supported an investment rating system that denied mortgages in majority Black areas or for Black people who tried to purchase property in all-White neighborhoods. This racist system of property assessment and valuation, later known as redlining, has crippled Black access to wealth, quality housing, and even political power up to the present.

Mounting Black frustrations with racist New Deal policies set the terms for substantive change. Black leaders like Mary McLeod Bethune worked from within Roosevelt's so-called Black Cabinet. At the same time, the Great Migration helped consolidate Black political power in Northern urban centers through the Democratic party and even more radical alternatives.

Even if reluctantly, Roosevelt was forced to listen. The Works Project (later, Works Progress) Administration put thousands of men and women to work building the national infrastructure of new roads, tunnels, bridges, schools, and water-supply systems. And the federal government finally worked to ensure local officials complied with an explicit nondiscrimination approach. By 1939, the administration had provided assistance to 1 million Black families.

THE PROLETARIAN TURN

The Great Depression exposed capitalism's limits, and many African Americans began to explore alternative economic systems. They embraced a style of politics based on more direct action through demonstrations, rallies, protests, and boycotts. This movement was called the proletarian turn. Many became sympathetic to a left-wing political world that offered an economic analysis of Black people's second-class citizenship.

The proletarian turn was already emerging in Chicago before the Great Depression, with the 1925 founding of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids. The organization focused on the racial and economic conditions of Black workers who were toiling away for the George Pullman railcar company. The Pullman cars sold an experience of luxurious service built around a White nostalgia for Black servitude that had been lost with the end of slavery. All the porters were Black, and they were also all called George, after their boss. The Brotherhood emerged to demand better wages and to call for an end to such dehumanizing and racially patronizing treatment.

The 1930s also witnessed the boycott campaign. This nonviolent, direct action effort secured more than 2,000 service jobs for Black workers in Chicago. It was imitated with varying levels of success in migrant communities all over the country. In Detroit, Black women formed their

own Housewives' League. They used directed spending campaigns to build economic power and persuade businesses to hire Black workers. As such leagues spread to other cities, they strengthened the pledge to support Black businesses, buy Black products, and cultivate Black wealth and workers in their own communities.

Ella Baker was immediately drawn to the proletarian turn. She had migrated to the North in 1927, and she went to Harlem as a polished young woman with a college degree. The Great Depression turned young Ella's attention to what she described as Harlem's "hotbed of radical thinking." She helped form the first Negro history club at the Harlem Library and participated in Harlem's branch of the Housewives' League and the Domestic Workers' Union. She also helped create the Young Negroes' Cooperative League, where the cooperative approach of all members buying equal shares established a vision of egalitarian and participatory democracy.

Like many, Baker was enraptured by local campaigns in defense of Angelo Herndon and the Scottsboro Boys, who suffered injustices that powerfully captured the travails of New Deal racism everywhere. In 1932, Herndon led an interracial group of unemployed workers in Atlanta in a protest after they were dropped from the government relief rolls. He was sentenced to 18 to 20 years in prison under a Georgia insurrection statute. Around the same time, nine Black teenagers in Scottsboro, Alabama, were falsely accused of raping two White women. The Communist Party's International Labor Defense sprang into action. Protests and defense committees took shape in migrant cities across the country as part of a global campaign. Migrants saw themselves and their families in Herndon and the Scottsboro Boys. Herndon's conviction was overturned in 1937; once released from prison, he went on a celebratory tour throughout Northern migrant communities.

THE NATIONAL NEGRO CONGRESS

The growing influence of the proletarian turn on Black political life was best seen at the 1936 National Negro Congress in Chicago. That February, more than 5,000 artists and activists, laborers and leaders, clubwomen and

Communists, preachers and politicians rubbed shoulders to form a Black popular front. A. Philip Randolph took leadership, Ella Baker served as director of publicity, and Richard Wright was head of the writers' section.

The organization's Chicago Council shaped the new Congress of Industrial Organizations and pushed to build organized labor without the skilled trade or craft distinctions that had kept African Americans on the outside. The dominant specter that seemed to loom largest over this convening was what Randolph called the "danger of fascism." This danger seemed clearest in the struggle against housing segregation.

Today, the term *ghetto* is almost synonymous with underserved Black urban communities. But in the 1930s, it was exclusively used to describe segregated Jewish communities. Against the backdrop of fascism, African Americans began using the term as a political critique of racially restrictive housing covenants and New Deal-sponsored residential segregation in the US.

In1937, the *Chicago Defender* published the editorial "Building Ghettoes." Circuit Court Judge Michael Feinberg had upheld a restrictive housing covenant in the significantly Jewish neighborhood of Hyde Park, home of the liberal University of Chicago, which sponsored covenants in the neighborhood. In his ruling, Feinberg, who was Jewish, told Black people to stay away from a place where they were not wanted. The *Defender* editorial swiftly reminded Feinberg that "he is perhaps only a generation away from a Russian or a Polish ghetto." The fight against Black ghettoes spurred a robust housing justice politics that brought down restrictive covenants.

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12

The Great Migration during World War II

Although the Great Migration slowed during the Great Depression, it picked up again in the early 1940s. The young people who came to the North with their families in the second wave of migration entered prosperous wartime cities. Their hopes for a better life had now become expectations. However, as you will see in this lecture, Black demands for the freedoms that America began to circulate across the globe were met with White resentment in the US. American patriotism had come to mean the deferment of Black dreams.

THE ZOOT SUIT

In the 1940s, jazz musicians across the country were sporting a new style of dress—the zoot suit. It featured an oversized coat and wide pants with tight cuffs. For many urban youths, this outfit represented a bold expression of pride in flouting the rules of convention. But against the backdrop of World War II, others considered the suit unpatriotic. The garments required significant amounts of fabric at a time when textiles were subject to strict rationing by the US War Production Board. Production of the suit was banned in 1942; however, the zoot suit remained popular with a growing number of young Mexican, African, and Filipino Americans in wartime industrial cities.

White servicemen and residents frequently harassed and beat zoot suit wearers. Such daily acts of terror came to a head on May 31, 1943. A group of White sailors on leave clashed with a group of young Latinos in downtown Los Angeles. As the violence escalated over the course of days, thousands of White servicemen joined the attacks in the Zoot Suit Riots. Mexican Americans in Lincoln Heights and African Americans along Central Avenue began to organize responses. The escalation finally compelled the Navy and Marine Corps to declare the city off-limits to all military personnel.

The riots spread to San Diego and across the country to other industrial cities like Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York. Notably, White zoot suiters were not harassed. Novelist Chester Himes put it best: "The Zoot Suit Riots are Race Riots." The arrival of new migrants during wartime had ignited a home-front battle over the limits and future of American democracy. In the most extravagant sense, the zoot suit was the uniform of soldiers in the "other" war.

THE "OTHER" WAR

During the early years of World War II, Northern Whites complained about "bump and push" squads of Black youth who seemed to deliberately jostle Whites in crowded buses and ration lines. This broader sense of Black defiance was bolstered by the second wave of migration that flooded American cities across the Northeast, Midwest, and West Coast, beginning in 1940. The pull of wartime prosperity and the push of mechanized cotton harvesting created a mass exodus of more than 4 million Black Southerners.

Factories and docks in places like Detroit and Los Angeles were being converted into centers of war-related production in the fight against fascism. And Black migrants came, hoping to become full citizens on the assembly lines that fed the front lines. However, new migrants continued to find themselves on the margins of prosperity in these urban arsenals. Wartime factories, defense worker housing, and the armed forces were all segregated. The Red Cross even segregated blood donations for the war effort.

By March 1942, Black workers made up only 2.5% to 3% of all war production workers, and they were relegated to the low-skilled, low-wage positions. Employment conditions only improved gradually because of the

militant agitation of interracial labor unions. The Congress of Industrial Organizations sidestepped the racist elitism of trade unions to build coalitions across all trades and sectors of labor. Organizing drives not only funneled more jobs to African Americans but also raised wages and improved working conditions for those on the lowest rung. Still, 80% of the Black working class remained nonunion workers.

Moreover, in the Black community, the pull of the wartime economy contributed to a sharper distinction between a middle class and skilled working class and a growing group of the unemployed and working poor. These divisions often played out through conflicts over the cultural differences between the established residents and Southern migrants. In many ways, the zoot suit was so powerful because it captured these wartime conditions of the migrant city.

As soon as Malcolm Little migrated to the Roxbury section of Boston, he was immediately frustrated with the pretensions of his middle-class neighbors. Their class solution to White rage was to arm themselves with a respectability that placed service and country above all. However, such action never guaranteed Black access to equality among their White peers. And in Jim Crow America, service to country meant an acceptance of the racial inequality that already existed.


MALCOLM X

In disgust, Malcolm turned to the burgeoning hipster culture of the zoot suit. The exaggerated suit served as an expression of those who felt marginalized by White rage and Black respectability. Zoot suiters were able-bodied men who chose to congregate at jazz events

in ballrooms instead of accepting jobs doing subservient manual labor. A significant number also refused service in the war. Enlistment represented another kind of slavery when the rights being fought for were not secure at home.

It's not a coincidence that the young migrant and zoot-suiter Malcolm Little became the Black activist Malcolm X. The defiance of this hipster culture served as the most extreme reflection of a broader Black wartime politics, forged in the conditions faced by the second wave of the Great Migration.

THE FORMATION OF GHETTOES

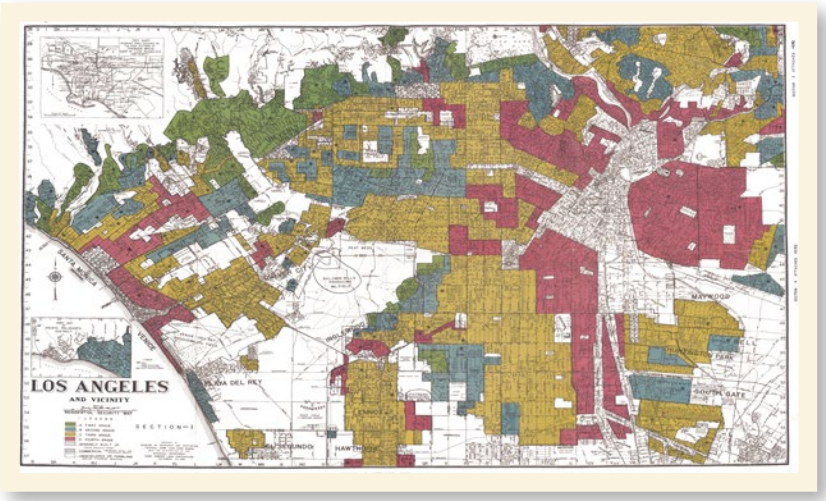
From the start of the New Deal, the Federal Housing Administration allowed racially restrictive covenants in the North to structure public housing. The second Great Migration swelled urban Black communities beyond capacity; however, residential segregation and violence placed severe restrictions on any neighborhood expansion.

Detroit was considered the arsenal of democracy with all its defense factories. It was also a city of deep and unrelenting racial segregation and violence. It attracted more than 60,000 migrants during the first few years of the war, and housing became so scarce that Black workers shared beds in 8-hour shifts in "hot sheet" boarding houses. With such a tight housing crunch, Detroiters lobbied for more affordable housing.

When the city announced that the new Sojourner Truth Housing Projects would be open to African Americans, White residents went wild. Federal housing officials relented to keep public housing as Whites only, but Black residents fought back. On picket lines, Black protestors leaned into the patriotic rhetoric of the war with chants like "Together We Fight, Together We Live!" Federal officials yielded and made the housing open for "Negro occupancy."

However, the battle continued on the private housing front. The federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation created residential security maps that banks then used to identify the investment security of a neighborhood, which was determined by the racial inhabitants. A red line was drawn around

neighborhoods with Black residents, which identified the lowest ranking. Redlining racially structured access to mortgage loans, refinancing, and property value.



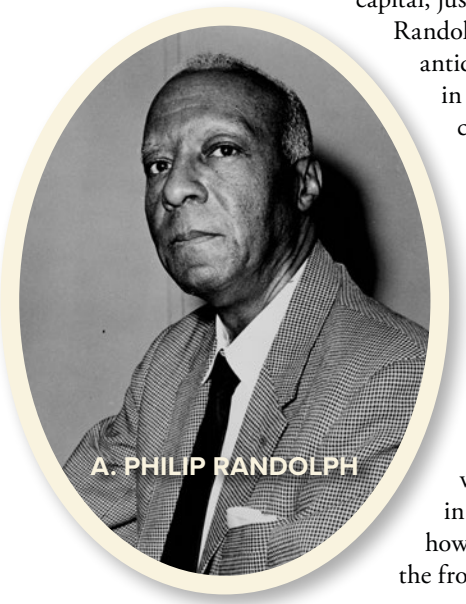
African American neighborhoods in Los Angeles, with unparalleled rates of homeownership, were still increasingly isolated, creating the unique single-family housing ghetto of the South Central corridor. Racial demographics turned a neighborhood with Black residents into a zone of financial divestment. The formation of these Black ghettoes also left Black communities exposed to gerrymandering. Voting districts divided Black neighborhoods to undermine even the possibility of turning residential segregation into a focused Black political power. Neighborhood school districts were also redrawn in unorthodox ways to prevent integration and place White students in the best facilities.

The US formally entered World War II as the self-professed face of democracy. However, the domestic racial contortion of school districts, voting maps, employment practices, and residency requirements told a very different story.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Black urban communities like Chicago's Bronzeville continued to burst at the seams. But somehow, several affluent Black families convinced property owners to sell in the "White island" area of Washington Park. The White landowners sued but lost in the 1940 US Supreme Court case of *Hansberry v. Lee*. The decision did not pronounce residential restrictive covenants illegal, but it declared that a ruling against one property could no longer be applied to other properties under the same housing association. This made the enforcement of area-wide covenants very expensive. The landmark 1948 *Shelly v. Kraemer* case made racial covenants unenforceable by law. However, White developers and homeowners continued to uphold informal Whites-only restrictions when renting, selling, or leasing properties.

In 1941, longtime activist A. Philip Randolph threatened a 10,000-person March on Washington Movement to protest the segregation of wartime factories that profited from government contracts. President Roosevelt feared the spectacle of Black protest at the nation's capital, just on the eve of war. But although Randolph specifically called for an antidiscrimination order—at least in all factories with government contracts—the White House remained silent. Then Randolph promised that 100,000 Black people were ready to march on Washington. The risk of internal dissent would tarnish the American democratic ideal being sold to the world. As a result, a week before the planned march, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which mandated fair employment in defense industries. This order, however, did not desegregate labor on the front lines or even in the factories.



A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

The growing Black discontent would continue. In January 1942—less than 2 months after the US officially entered the war—*The Pittsburgh Courier* published a letter to the editor from James G. Thompson. He was a young Black man from Wichita who worked in an airplane factory cafeteria. In his letter, Thompson asked whether African Americans should fight and die for democracy abroad when they were denied rights as full citizens at home. He advocated a Double V campaign. The first V stood for "victory over our enemies from without, and the second V for victory over our enemies within."

The *Courier* put a Double V campaign into full swing, which quickly spread to other African American newspapers across the country. But Black soldiers began to tell a different story. Soldier Nelson Peery explained that Double V "was having the black soldier make *greater* sacrifices and show *greater* patriotism than the whites. The black press did not understand that we were part of the new struggle of the colored nine-tenths." The colored nine-tenths pointed to the non-White people across the world who were slowly starting to break the yokes of European and American colonialism. This would later be called the Third World movement.

In 1942, an interracial group of pacifists in Chicago formed the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which pioneered the use of sit-ins and other direct action tactics to challenge segregation in Northern cities. At the same time, Ella Baker began pushing New York City's NAACP headquarters to decentralize its leadership and aid its membership in more direct action campaigns. She traveled the South and established networks that shaped her later mentorship with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The 1940s were filled with similar migrant stories that would set the foundation for what became the broader Black Freedom Movement—that is, the civil rights movement.

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