

# The negro movement

Sociology, Racism



Looking back at the history of the culture that has risen from the ashes; one may be quite surprised just how far the African American culture has come. The progression of the African American culture is indeed one to be proud of. From cotton fields to Harlem, "The New Negro Movement", sparked a sense of cultural self-determination, with a yearning to strive for economic, political equality, and civic participation. This was a movement that sparked a wide range of advancements in the African American culture.

Leaving footprints of great individuals as well as set a path way for future generations to follow; setting a trend for Black greatness. After the American Civil War there was a spark within the African American culture to diminish the legacy of slavery. It started in 1908, with the development of the NAACP (The National Association of Colored People), which led the fight against racial discrimination. What is known as "The Great migration" in 1914 was the migration of over 500, 000 or more Blacks in a six year period; for industry jobs, and overall better opportunities.

Blacks were leaving the South headed North in search for something new. This was the escape they longed for from oppressive living and social conditions that threatened life. New York was one of the more appealing states, considering New York schools prohibited separate schools for African Americans. Therefore, education was also made easier for African Americans. By 1819 Harlem, New York had the highest count of Black people in the world. In 1916-17, Hubert Harrison; whom is considered the father of "The New Negro Movement" established his first association "The Liberty League", along with his first newspaper.

During the 1920's and 1930's, African Americans expressed themselves through Literature, Art, Music, Drama, Movies, and protest. Mr. Harrison encouraged Blacks to expand and improve through education, awareness, and Afro-centric community programs. With "The Voice" of "The New Negro Movement" energized the Black community to demand equality. This was in fact the birth of the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance is the name given to the period from the end of World War I and through the 1930's Depression era. During this time, there were many great literary works to come about. A group of writers produced a great group of Literature.

Some of those writers include: Alain Locke, who described himself as the "midwife" to aspiring young black writers of the 1920s. In a 1925 essay entitled 'The New Negro', Howard University Professor of Philosophy Alain Locke described this transformation as not relying on older time-worn models but, rather, embracing a 'new psychology' and 'new spirit'. Central to Locke's prescription was the mandate that the 'New Negro' had to 'smash' all of the racial, social and psychological impediments that had long obstructed black achievement. Six years prior to Locke's essay, the pioneering black film maker Oscar Micheaux called for similar changes.

In his film *Within our Gates*, Micheaux represented a virtual cornucopia of 'New Negro' types: from the educated and entrepreneurial 'race' man and woman to the incorrigible Negro hustler, from the liberal white philanthropist to the hard core white racist. Micheaux created a complex, melodramatic narrative around these types in order to develop a morality tale of pride, prejudice, misanthropy and progressivism that would be revisited by Locke

and others (Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance (London/California: Hayward Gallery, Institute of International Visual Arts and University of California Press, 1997).

Black-owned magazines and newspapers flourished, freeing African Americans from the constricting influences of mainstream white society. Charles S. Johnson's Opportunity magazine became the leading voice of black culture, and W. E. B. DuBois's journal, The Crisis, with Jessie Redmon Fauset as its literary editor, launched the literary careers of such writers as Arna Bontemps, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen (The Birth of the Harlem Renaissance: History & Timeline — Infoplease. com).

Additionally, there were other aspects of Black greatness emerging from oppression. "...Through their artistry, the literature of this period helped to facilitate a transformation from the psychology of the " Old Negro" (characterized by an implied inferiority of the post-Reconstruction era when black artists often did not control the means of production or editorial prerogatives) to the " New Negro" (characterized as self-assertive, racially conscious, articulate, and, for the most part, in charge of what they produced).

Landmark texts that marked this transformation and encouraged increased exploration of African American experience through literature included The Book of American Negro Poetry (1922), edited by James Weldon Johnson and The New Negro (1925) by Locke. The short-lived literary magazine Fire!! (1926) also had a significant impact on the literary production because it represented the efforts of younger African American writers (such as Hughes

and Hurston) to claim their own creativity apart from older artists (such as DuBois and James Weldon Johnson), as well as to establish autonomy from potential white exploiters... (Trudier Harris-Lopez, "Forward" Harlem Renaissance, Volume I. Janet Witalec, project editor. Farmington Hill, MI: Gale, 2003 Call and Response: The Riverside Anthology of the African American Literary Tradition. Ed. Patricia Liggins Hill. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998). The Spiritual Coming of Age was solely for African Americans to express themselves and exert self-determination. To have a sense of race pride. White Literary establishments became fascinated and began to publish their works. African American Literature has impacted American culture in an enormous way.

Their writings have inspired many African Americans to continue the legacy in Literature. At this same time, the Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey began his promotion of the "Back to Africa movement." Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL), which advocated the reuniting of all people of African ancestry into one community with one absolute government. The movement not only encouraged African-Americans to come together, but to also feel pride in their heritage and race (<http://www.biography.com/blackhistory/harlem-renaissance.sp>). The Harlem Renaissance was a defining movement within the African American culture. 1929 marked the beginning of the end of the Harlem Renaissance. Due to the economic declines, many prominent writers departed Harlem. Although there was not much time during this period, this era influenced many writers to come. Its great moments in History like this that inspire and influence generations to come. The Harlem riot of 1935 was

the final event. The progression of African Americans has come a long way. From slavery to Harlem, and beyond; African Americans have made their mark in History.

Shortly after the Renaissance, many came into their own creativity. With the emergences of people like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. , Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, the African American culture has gone far beyond what was imagined centuries ago. Many great musicians from jazz era contributed to the mass music frenzy we see today. With great musicians like Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, we now have Kenny G, and Boney James. With Poets such as Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston, we have Maya Angelou, and Gwendolyn Brooks.

The Harlem Renaissance has contributed too many great works among African Americans. The African American culture has blossomed in many ways. In the beginning of the 1970's, African American literature went mainstream, and has continued to do well; moreover, books by Black authors continue today to receive best-selling awards. This also marks the era where African American writings were considered as a legitimate genre of American Literature. The Civil Rights movement made a powerful impression on black voices in the 1960s.

Baldwin, whose fiction and essays dealt not only with race but sexuality, family, the ex-pat life, and his childhood in the Church, returned from many years in Paris to participate in the burgeoning movement. Many of Baldwin's most significant works were written in the 60s, including *Another Country* and *The Fire Next Time* (" African American Literature: History, Crossword,

Quizzes, Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights. " Infoplease. © 2000-2007 Pearson Education, publishing as Infoplease. 26 Apr. 2011<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/bhmlit1.html>).