

Clark-lewis, elizabeth.  
living in, living out:  
african american  
domestics and the...

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Elizabeth Clerk-Lewis in her book narrates the experiences and lives of African American in Washington and how women worked for wealthy white families. This writer has given detailed and reliable information regarding the African American racism, since a grandmother was part of the great migration of the African American, and she could give an oral history regarding the migration. This has enabled her to publish a book with first-hand information that is not biased. Over the last few decades, the essential meaning of gender and sex had been transformed to mean something different apart from its actual meaning. Racial discrimination was common especially to the black American, who had arisen from the people who were enslaved from Africa (Clark-Lewis, 3).

They were referred to as people with a 'colored blood'. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in his works found that the white employees assigned services by female civilians to black men in the army life, and they were taught how to cook and clean. They reserved the modern jobs for the whites exclusively (Clark-Lewis, 20). The black men were regarded as the invisible employees and women were considered than men and the men did the actual working. That is, they were forced to do much than expected. These times involved deep depression and oppression for the black Americans since they were not regarded as American citizen and were purely undermined for they had arisen from the slaves. The whites had decided that they evacuate the Blacks and move them to Montclair a suburban area near the great Metropolitans. Much of the research and writings by Elizabeth, the author, is based on activities in this region (Rollins, 38). She had sent her son from rural of Virginia farm where the family had been working as sharecroppers to

areas to Montclair.

Elizabeth worked as a domestic servant at Montclair to support herself while her son Theodore attended schools. At school, Theodore did well such that educational opportunities led to scholarships that supported him up to the higher levels. Most blacks could not be able to access such schools due to racial discrimination, but Theodore had been favored for his good performance (Dunaway et al., 13). The black residents in the suburban areas had recognized him and had much hope in him that they always encouraged him to attend college even if none of his relatives had been educated to that level that he had attained. After getting a scholarship from a black women's club, Theodore completed his studies and became a dentist.

According to Rollins, (p 38) the main aim of racism was to make the black Americans independent and to create a hierarchy in which the whites were on the best jobs while the African Americans worked as subordinate staff. Theodore became the first black dean in the dental school, in the United States. This was a sign of upcoming of African Americans. In his position, Theodore influenced the social and economic advancement of the blacks and most of them migrated from Northern Virginia to work in service sector jobs since they offered better wages than the jobs done previously as sharecroppers. At this level, the blacks were able to become financially dependent on Montclair's, and they could now be able to attain and work as professional workers and in white collar jobs.

This resulted into gradual interaction of the white contrary to what was expected and this time it was unavoidable since the Blacks population in 1920 to 1940 had increased so much and had started dominating most of

the places around Montclair (Clark-Lewis, 57). This caused the blacks to fight for equality especially for people who worked as cooks, janitors and maids. The other factors that led to migration of the Africans to Montclair included the promise of freedom from racial violence that was common in the South. During the interwar period, Africans were being restricted from migrating but some whites recruited them to work as nurses, chauffeurs, and clerks but they were excluded from civic leadership. After the massive migration, the African Americans did not accept the unequal treated and thus they extended their services to the North to work as nurses, chauffeurs, and clerks. The mutual harmony that existed between the blacks made them seek jobs from their relatives and friends, but they were all still excluded from skilled blue-collar and white-collar jobs.

According to the author, the discrimination of the blacks especially the women was the indication that women are never regarded superior in any way. Their persistence reduced the resistance of the whites from administering the equality for all. This was how they overcame the racism and later on. They were able to compete with the whites for a better job including administrative and civic works. This was a strategic plan for breaking the gap that was to be created between the blacks and whites. This resulted to enrollment of the blacks to the schools of the white and sign of equality and transformation of dived society was starting to be covered. The intelligence of the blacks could not be overlooked due to their economic power. The whites later could not be able to use violence to contain and subordinate black residents but rather relied on them due to their capability in productivity and economic power. Since the Blacks community's economic

subordination affected all aspects of their public life in Montclair, and their emergence as an autonomous economic vibrant community was able to challenge the racial hierarchy and the whites' supremacy (Rollins, 19). In addition to climbing the social ladder themselves, the economic ascent of the black service workers also drew blacks closer to more professional and entrepreneurial positions in Montclair. This allowed the black community to gain the financial ability to establish and support their premises and establishments such as schools and hospitals since they also did not want to portray a sign of dependence on the whites.

The blacks who had professional skills and could not be granted opportunities to serve the whites now had a chance to join Montclair where their practice was well supported. For instance, Doctor John Kenny fled in south because he could not practice medicine the area without encountering the hostility of the Whites. Fortunately hospitals for the Blacks were on demand and serving as a doctor in these hospitals was valuable to the blacks. The blacks patients could flourish in the hospital in search for health assistance since the black patients and physicians were barred from most of the hospitals in northern Jersey.

The black community could easily patronize the hospital. Its advancement made Kenny a national importance and he went ahead and co-founded the National Medical Association, a black professional medical association after the white doctors denied the black doctors into the American Medical Association. He also opened his own medical practice in Montclair in 1939 and attracted some other people to establish medical practices that served the black residents (Dunaway et al., 49). Kenny thus became a national

leader among black doctors and led the New Jersey State Medical Society. This gave rise to the development of Montclair's' black professional class. Black lawyers also established successful professional practices in Montclair supported by economic mobility of the black service workers (Clark-Lewis, 204).

African Americans could not afford to pay a white lawyer in white juries since they always ruled against the black citizens regardless of the facts presented in the cases. This encouraged Black professionals such as William to establish a thriving law practice in Newark. Class distinction existed, but the cohesive Blacks community built a stable and secure economy. Business men also joined and improved in the development of the blacks' community. They practices small business and retail trades and could now cater for their wants up to the local level. By 1920, financial institutions cropped up but some collapsed during the Great Depression with most of businesses surviving, illustrating the stability of the community's economy.

**Thesis statement: The establishment of social organization gave a civic voice to the blacks' community.**

This world's economic strain began in October 1929 and lasted until 1939. In 1933 when the state of the economy worsened so many Americans became unemployed and thus what prompted their declaration of inequality between the blacks and the whites (Rollins, 111). They believed that the blacks do not originally belong to that continent and thus deserved to be under their control as they try to recover the state of the economy.

The harmony and cohesion of the black community were crucial in overcoming the period of the great depression in which the world economy

and declines so much due to fall of prices of stocks. This period was also accompanied by a great drought in some parts of America. While some farmers could not afford to harvest their crops due to droughts, others were forced to leave crops rotting in the fields while some other people elsewhere were starving. Unemployment of over 6-million American worsened the situation, and most of the industries in the country dropped by half. Major causes of this economic decline were falling crops and commodity prices and insufficient purchasing power of the middle class and the working class which made it hard to sustain the high level of production . Poor governance policies also contributed to poor decisions regarding modification of market prices.

The rise in international tariffs caused reduction in international trade and consequently an abrupt reduction in the supply of money. Millions of shares became worthless, and investors who had acquired loans for investment ended up being wiped out completely. The great depression started in the American state and spread to other countries worldwide and the expectation was that it would only last for two months and failure of this prediction by President Herbert Hoover, was an indication of his undermine for the seriousness of the matter. In America, people living in towns were forced to go to back to the farms when the situation showed no signs of recovery. Business could not be depended upon to support the standards and costly lives in the towns. The people of America lost hope in Hoover, and he lost election in 1932 to Franklin Delano (Clark-Lewis, 214).

The depression was a major challenge to America since it registered the highest number of immigrants to other countries. Most people migrated to

areas that were not seriously hit such as Canada, Australia and South America. Most of the immigrants were foreign investors who went back to their native countries. There was a great rise in the racial tensions. Government expenditure to cater for the great population increased due to increase in a number of unemployment hence dependence especially when most areas were hit by great drought, and there were unprecedented levels of famine and high level of poverty (Dunaway et al., 80). This slump came to an end when production and consumption increased while unemployment decreased. Several programs were formed in an effort to help in recovery of the economic crash. The great depression marked a great historical period of the world.

## **Works Cited**

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