

Great migration

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



Beginning 1910 and leading through the end of the 1920's, a "Great Migration" took place in the United States where more than 2 million African Americans moved from the Southern United States to the Midwest, Northeast and West. Much of the movement was a response to the high levels of racism in the South as well as employment opportunities in the growing industrial cities. The results of this movement not only affected the current economic climate but also led to many changes that would continue to evolve for generations to come. This essay is designed to provide a deeper understanding of the migration in order to hopefully provide insight into much of the culture we encounter in today's society. As we explore the deeper reasoning behind the sudden migration of African Americans to the more urbanized locations of America, we must first consider the increased level of racism in the South of this time. "The primary factor for migration was the racial climate and widespread violence of lynching in the South. "1 With the Jim Crow laws being in effect, much of the idea of "separate but equal" facilities for African Americans was terribly skewed. "In reality, this led to treatment and accommodations that were usually inferior to those provided for white Americans, systematizing a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages. "2 Through these disadvantages, a higher level of oppression was then conveniently enforced on African Americans of the South including voting restrictions, separation of schools and job restrictions. During and World War 1, the industries of the North began to grow significantly due to the needs of the war. As industries grew, so did the job market. With the increase in job openings and the restrictions placed on immigration to the United States, blacks from the South found

opportunity to escape the harsh economic climate of the South. Looking at the growth of the cities, a connection is made with the railroad locations. “ People tended to take the cheapest rail ticket possible. This resulted in, for example, many people from Mississippi moving directly north to Chicago, from Alabama to Cleveland and Detroit, and Louisiana to California. ”¹ With this mass movement, came a huge cultural shift among African Americans. Having better opportunities in industries away from the failing farming market, fighting in the Great War, and forming new communities away from the more severely oppressive South brought about a level of pride in their black culture, much of this leading to riots and protesting among African American groups. Even before the war, African Americans had stepped up protests against discrimination. The NAACP “ fought school segregation in Northern cities during the 1920s and lobbied hard, though unsuccessfully, for a federal anti-lynching bill. ”³ With the continued growth of black pride, it soon found its cultural expression in the “ Harlem Renaissance--the first self-conscious literary and artistic movement in African American history. During the 1920s, Harlem became the capital of black America, attracting black intellectuals and artists from across the country and the Caribbean. Soon, the Harlem Renaissance was in full bloom. ”³ Because African American migrants maintained much of their Southern culture and speech patterns, such differences created a sense of “ otherness” in terms of their acceptance by others who were living in the cities before them. “ Stereotypes ascribed to “ black” people during this period and ensuing generations often derived from African American migrants' rural cultural traditions, which were maintained in stark contrast to the urban environments in which the people

resided. "1 Many of these stereotypes are known and enforced even in today's society showing the underlying effect of racism in a culture years down the road. The Great Migration's effects on our culture both political, economic and sociologically have effected much of where we are today. In hopes of branching even further from our tainted past, we must learn from it.

" Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." 4 -

George Santayana Sources: 1. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Migration_\(African_American\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Migration_(African_American)) 2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws 3. http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=443 4. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Santayana