

Harlem renaissance

[History](#)



Harlem Renaissance Historical Overview By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century Harlem in Manhattan, New York had become a prosperous black middle class neighborhood, stemming from the economic elevation of many thousand African-Americans. This rise in economic status brought about a sense of self-confidence that was erstwhile lacking among the African Americans, and could well be said to be the nascent period of the Harlem Renaissance. However, it was the start of the First World War in 1914 that was instrumental in the Harlem Renaissance becoming the focus of the expression of the African American resurgence. Supported by the African American Church and even more so by the African American writers, playwrights, artists, and musicians; the expression of African American resentment and the new grown self- confidence was demonstrated in their protests of American entry into the First World War in 1917. The Harlem Renaissance was very vocal against what they believed was a capitalist war that was not in their interests, and so exhorted the African American brought into New York from the South to support the war effort, to join the trade unions instead of being involved in the actual fighting in the war. Yet, many of the African Americans did go to war, expecting to get full citizenship. The denial of citizenship along with the segregation faced by them in the army, caused the returning soldiers to be involved in the expression demanding more rights for the African Americans (Williams, p. 1-20).

Impact of the Harlem Renaissance on the African Americans

The newly found prosperity of the African Americans disappeared with the Great Depression in 1929. This was to have a profound impact on the survival of the Harlem Renaissance. In the beginning, the Great Depression had little impact on the fortunes of Harlem. Life went on as usual and the <https://assignbuster.com/harlem-renaissance-essay-samples-4/>

great writers continued to churn out inspirational works that expressed the African American desire of greater freedom and social expression. Yet, the era of the great days of Harlem were over. Erosion of the new found prosperity gradually reduced the importance of Harlem, as people strived to face the challenges of the Great Depression. The final nail in the coffin was the repeal of Prohibition by the government in 1933. The nightlife of Harlem disappeared, with the population of Manhattan preferring to remain in Manhattan, as they could drink legally in Manhattan. Many of the Harlem residents lost their jobs and were forced to eke out a living in penury, leading to racial riots (Worth, p. 92-98). Yet, to view the impact of the Harlem Renaissance as limited to the fortunes of Harlem is to take a very narrow view of it. The impact has to be viewed from what it contributed to the senses of the African American Americans, due to the huge contributions and influence that writers, playwrights, artists, and musicians had on the Harlem Renaissance. The true impact of the Harlem renaissance was a revival of the African American culture, with exposure to the world and the sense of empowerment it brought to the African Americans (Ebony, p. 144-148).

Outcome

Though racial prejudice remained, the Harlem Renaissance enabled the African Americans to erase the memories of slavery from their minds. The African Americans found new ways to perceive the racial prejudice to reduce its impact on their lives. The White Americans were forced to contend with a new resurgent African American. The more important outcome was the creativity of the African American that spurred the Harlem Renaissance lived on' to continue to vitalize the creative works that instilled honor in the African Americans, though with a tinge of the troubles they faced from racial

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prejudice. These feelings instilled in the African Americans would give rise to the later Civil Rights Movement (Abherjani & West, p. xii-xiii).

Continuing Impact of the Harlem Renaissance

Given the importance that literary works, artistic works, and music had in the Harlem Renaissance, it is but natural that it is in these areas that the Harlem Renaissance continues to have a lasting effect. In the early twentieth century the eyes of the world were opened to African American culture and their aspirations, in the modern era we continue to experience the African American literary vocabulary that is based on forms, idioms, and patterns of speech, and music and songs and is easily recognized as so. The legacy of the Harlem Renaissance is seen in the shape that it gave African American literature and music of the modern era (Sanders, p. 96).

Works Cited

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