

# DEFINING MOMENTS THE GREAT MIGRATION NORTH, 1910-1970



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*Omni*graphics

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# Chapter Two

## THE FIRST GREAT MIGRATION



There is no mistaking what is now going on. It is a REGULAR EXODUS. It is without head, tail, or leadership. Its greatest factor is MOMENTUM, and this is increasing, despite amazing efforts on the part of white southerners to stop it. People are leaving their homes and everything about them, under cover of night, as though they were going on a day's journey—leaving forever.

—“‘Spring Drive’ Is On in Exodus of Race  
from All Over the South,”  
*Cleveland Advocate*, April 28, 1917

**I**n 1910 there were eight million African Americans living in the United States; seven million of them lived in the South. That same year, a migration of blacks began that would change the nation. Over the next thirty years, this trickle of migrating blacks became a flood of humanity. By 1940 1.5 million African Americans had migrated from the South to the North in the greatest internal migration in the nation's history. Determined to find better jobs, nicer homes, and increased educational opportunities for their children, African Americans left the corrosive segregationist policies of the Jim Crow South behind and journeyed north to claim their right to the American dream.

### Northern Industries Cry Out for Workers

When World War I began in Europe in 1914, immigration from Europe to the United States fell considerably. This decline was due in part to the

impact that the conflict had on ocean transportation and the large number of European men who entered military service. But the downturn also stemmed from a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States that had been building for a number of years. These feelings led Congress to pass laws that reduced the flow of immigrants onto American shores.

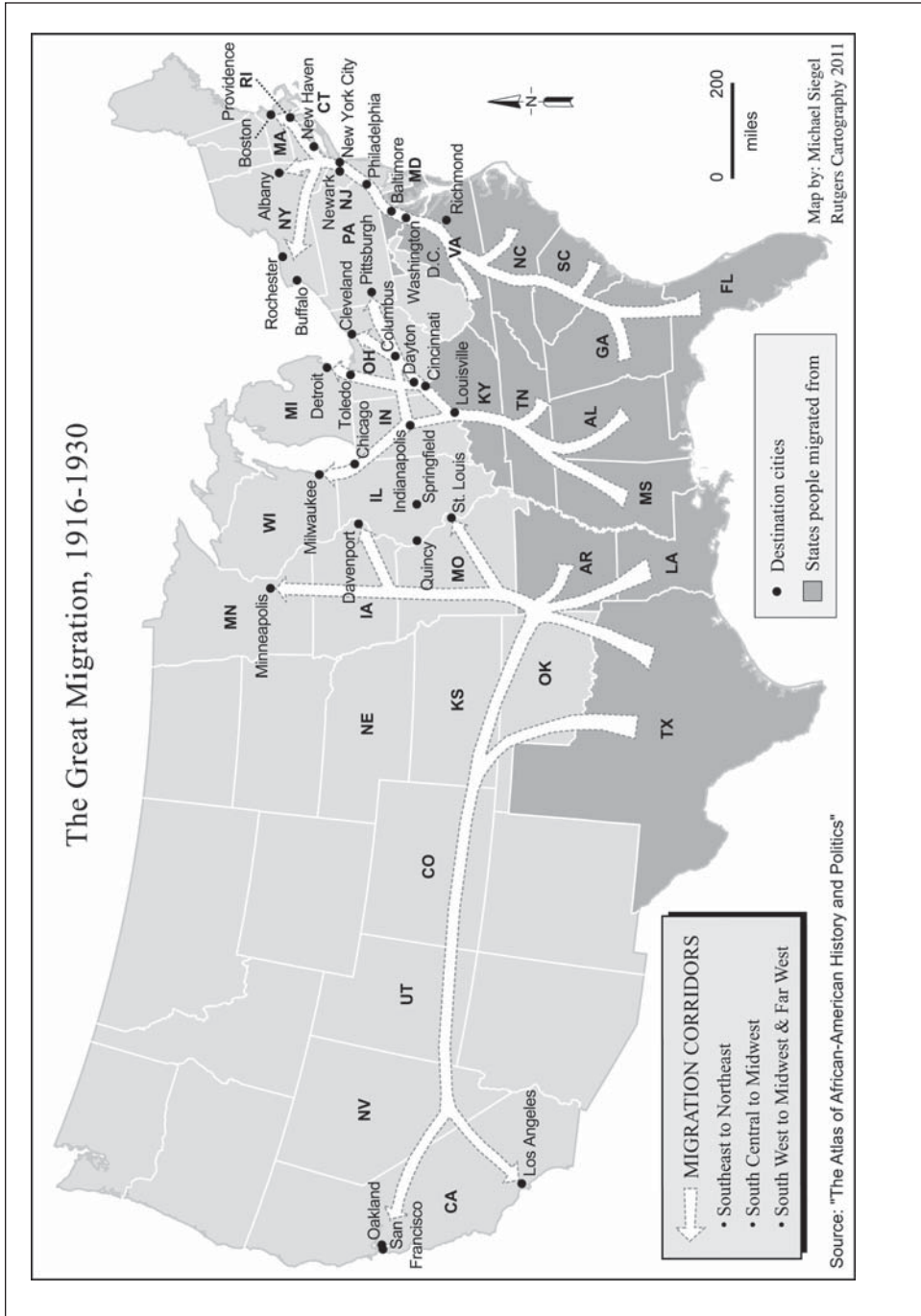
These developments posed a growing problem in the North, which was the home of many industries that supplied the armies of Europe. Left without an adequate supply of workers, many manufacturers looked to replenish their workforces by luring some of the vast numbers of African Americans who were toiling away on the farms and in the cities of the Deep South.

Labor agents for a wide range of companies, led by railroads desperate for employees to help transport war materials, began to visit the South. Factory owners offered free train tickets to the North, focusing most of their attention on healthy black males. The Pennsylvania Railroad was one of the first companies to actively recruit African Americans. Its agents sometimes stood on the corners of southern cities, giving their sales pitches to eager audiences.

The main routes of the First Great Migration thus followed America's train lines from specific points in the South to specific industrial centers in the North. In 1916, the Penn Railroad hired 16,000 southern African Americans, taking them mainly to the Pittsburgh area. The Illinois Central Railroad was another main route and source of transportation for migrants from Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Thousands used this route to reach Chicago and other bustling Great Lakes cities, including Detroit and Cleveland. On the East Coast, the Seaboard Line took migrants from Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Virginia to New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

### **Making the Decision to Leave**

As black newspaper *The Cleveland Advocate* noted, the First Great Migration was an essentially leaderless phenomenon. It was made up of individual African Americans who weighed the possibilities outlined by the labor agents and the reports of family members and friends who sent letters back home after settling in the North themselves. African Americans also thought long and hard about their future prospects if they stayed in the South. They all knew the reality of life for blacks in the region. The Jim Crow laws limited every aspect of their lives: where they lived and worked, their incomes, the



This map shows the major migration corridors of the peak years of the First Great Migration.

education available to them and their children, their ability to vote, and the personal safety of their families.

Social scientists often write about “push” and “pull” aspects of migrating populations—the factors that influence a group of people to move from one area to another. For African Americans in the South, the intolerable social and political situation under Jim Crow provided the “push,” while the prospect held out by the North of better employment, better schools, the protection of voting, and other basic civil rights provided the “pull.” As historian Isabel Wilkerson observed, the Great Migration was thus very similar to “the vast movements of refugees from famine, war, and genocide in other parts of the world, where oppressed people, whether fleeing twenty-first century Darfur or nineteenth-century Ireland, go great distances, journey across rivers, deserts, and oceans or as far as it takes to reach safety with the hope that life will be better wherever they land.”<sup>1</sup>

Once African Americans decided to migrate, they had to work out the particulars. Some individuals and families traveled by bus, boat, or truck. The most popular method of travel, however, was the train. Train routes took migrants directly to where the jobs were. The Illinois Central Railroad, for instance, delivered African Americans to the center of Chicago. In addition, in the early days of the Great Migration, the railroad companies themselves paid the fare of migrants taking jobs in some northern cities.

Once the railroads stopped covering the fares, however, it became very expensive to travel by train from the South to the North. Many African Americans struggled to come up with the ticket fare, especially after the railroads increased prices to take advantage of growing demand. In 1915, it cost an average of 2 cents a mile to travel by train; by 1918, the cost had soared to 24 cents a mile.<sup>2</sup> As a result, families often could afford to send only one member at a time. They would save for the train fare, sometimes selling off their belongings, then send one person north. When that family member found work, he or she would begin sending money home for the rest of the family. Another strategy employed by some African-American families was to travel north together in stages, stopping periodically along the way to find work and raise money to continue their journey.

African Americans who chose to migrate often did so in secret. Fearing reprisals from the white southerners in their communities, they would “slip away” at night. This caution was well-founded. Most whites in the region





African-American migrants waiting in a segregated waiting room for their train to arrive at a rail depot in Jacksonville, Florida, circa 1920.

were taken completely by surprise by the size and scope of the migration, and they were furious at the loss of their cheap labor pool. City and business leaders, in fact, resorted to a variety of tactics to try to stop blacks from leaving. Migrating African Americans were pulled off trains and buses, beaten, and put in jail. Labor agents were fined, and local officials tried to keep them from going into the black communities. Whites also tried to convince African Americans to stay by painting a rosy picture of black life in the South. One headline from the *Commercial Appeal* of Memphis claimed:

SOUTH IS BETTER FOR NEGRO, SAY MISSISSIPPIANS  
COLORED PEOPLE FOUND PROSPEROUS AND HAPPY

Such efforts indicated that white southerners recognized that the migration threatened their own livelihoods and the economic well-being of their communities. But these desperate moves also exposed their complete inability to understand how blacks in their communities truly felt about their circumstances.

### *The Chicago Defender*

White southerners also tried to suppress the distribution of the *Chicago Defender*, the leading black newspaper of the era. The *Chicago Defender*, which journalist Isabel Wilkerson called “the agitator and unwitting chronicler”<sup>3</sup> of the Great Migration, was founded and published by Robert S. Abbott. A great advocate for the migration of African Americans to the North—and especially to Chicago—Abbott couched his advocacy in Biblical terms. Borrowing from the old Negro Spiritual songs that were popular in black communities, he likened the plight of African Americans in the South to the Jews held in bondage in ancient Egypt. He called Chicago “the Promised Land” and described the Great Migration as “the flight out of Egypt.”

Not surprisingly, then, African-American churches frequently used the *Defender* to assure migrating blacks that they would be welcomed in the cities of the North. Large denominations like the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and the Baptist Church placed advertisements offering assistance to northern-bound migrants. The churches also sponsored migration clubs in the South, where African Americans could get information on jobs, housing, and welcoming congregations in Chicago, and where letters from successful migrants were read to encourage others. The memberships of both the AME and Baptist churches soared during the First Great Migration on the steady influx of new arrivals.

The *Chicago Defender* was also one of the first black newspapers to describe the vicious atmosphere of racial hatred that existed in the South. On January 16, 1916, Abbott published an article, titled “Why They Leave the South,” that outlined the number of lynchings that had happened during the previous year in individual southern states (see “The *Chicago Defender* Reports on Lynchings in the Jim Crow South,” p. 169). In January 1917, a *Defender* headline announced “Millions to Leave the South. Northern Invasion Will Start in Spring—Bound for the Promised Land.” The accompanying



The offices of the *Chicago Defender*, which played a leading role in publicizing opportunities for African Americans in the Northern cities.

story described the newspaper's efforts to make May 15, 1917, an epic day of mass migration, complete with reduced train fares to African Americans bound for the North. The grand event never took place, but blacks by the thousands wrote letters to the *Defender*, looking for more information about jobs, housing, and life in Chicago. The following letter, for example, reached the newspaper's offices from Dallas, Texas (dated April 23, 1917):

Dear Sir:

Having been informed through the *Chicago Defender* paper that I can secure information from you. I am a constant reader of the *Defender* and am contemplating on leaving here for some point north. Having your city in view I thought to inquire of you about conditions for work, housing, wages, and everything necessary.<sup>4</sup>

The *Chicago Defender's* outspoken advocacy for black migration to the North so incensed white southern business owners and politicians that the newspaper had to be smuggled into the South. Police confiscated copies whenever they were found, and some regions banned the publication entirely. One Mississippi county even called it "German propaganda" in an effort to tie it to America's enemy in World War I. Often, black Pullman car porters on the Illinois Central railroad line delivered copies in secret to drop-off points throughout the South. The smuggling effort was extremely successful, and the *Defender* became the most-read and most-influential African-American newspaper in the country.

### **On the Move: The Migration Begins**

The first African-American migrants made their way north beginning around 1910. By 1917, the number of migrants to the North had grown exponentially. Between 1917 and 1920, an estimated 700,000 to 1 million African Americans left the South. During the 1920s, another 800,000 to 1 million people made the move. The majority of them settled in the major industrial cities of the North, especially Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, St. Louis, New York City, and Philadelphia. Their arrival and settlement changed the demographic character of those cities forever.

This massive migration might have had an even greater impact were it not for the Great Depression of 1929. The terrible economic downturn shuttered numerous factories and created record levels of unemployment across the country. With northern jobs in short supply, the black exodus from the South greatly slowed. During the entire decade of the 1930s, in fact, only about 350,000 black migrants headed north.

During the 1910s and 1920s, though, the black exodus from the South was an incredible phenomenon. In Chicago, the black population grew from 44,000 to 234,000—a fivefold increase—between 1910 and 1930. Detroit saw its African-American population grow by an astounding 1,900 percent



A 1922 photograph of a black family from the rural South shortly after its arrival in Chicago.

between 1915 and 1930, expanding from 6,000 to 120,000. In Cleveland, the black population grew from 8,500 in 1910 to 72,000 in 1930. During that same time period, St. Louis's black population more than doubled, from 45,000 to 94,000. New York saw its African-American population more than triple, from 100,000 to 328,000 from 1910 to 1930, while Philadelphia's grew nearly as much, from 84,500 to 220,600.<sup>5</sup>

As this migration intensified, certain patterns gradually emerged. African Americans from specific regions of the South tended to move to specific areas in the North. They settled in neighborhoods that were home to friends and family from their home region, much as ethnic immigrant populations who had come to the United States had done over the previous two

centuries. Some blocks of Chicago, for instance, were populated almost entirely by people from the same southern town.

### **Finding Work and Housing in the North**

Many African-American migrants found jobs easily in the North. Most of them were unskilled positions, but they often paid more than three times what the laborers had received in the South. In the North, industry jobs during World War I paid an average of \$3 to \$5 per day; in the South, agricultural workers (sharecroppers) averaged just 75 cents to \$1 per day, and those working in southern factories averaged just \$2.50 per day. Many African-American women worked as domestic household help in the North, just as they had done in the South. In the North, however, they earned about twice as much on average in daily wages as they had earned in their old jobs.<sup>6</sup>

In Chicago, African Americans found jobs in factories, slaughterhouses, meat-packing plants, and steel mills. In Detroit, Henry Ford hired more black assembly workers than any other automaker, and the number of African Americans working for Ford Motor Company grew from 100 in 1916 to 10,000 in 1926. In Cleveland and Pittsburgh, African-American men became a dominant force in steel mills, metal casting, mining, and other industries, especially those related to the manufacture of war materials.

The arrival of black workers from the South also changed the political environment in the North. One of the first steps many African Americans took after arriving in the North was to register to vote, a basic civil right that had been virtually impossible for them to exercise in the South. When elections came around they voted overwhelmingly for Republican candidates. Their allegiance to Republicans was partly due to the party's historic role in freeing them from slavery, but it also stemmed from the racist policies of the Democratic South. In 1915 a black man, Republican Oscar De Priest, was elected to the Chicago City Council for the first time. Thirteen years later, De Priest became the first African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in the twentieth century.

Unfortunately, the First Great Migration also triggered a housing shortage in nearly every urban center in the North. This crisis was even worse for blacks because of the existence of segregationist policies, written and unwritten, that determined where African Americans could live in the North. Although segregation in the northern states was not defined by laws, as it was



Black families from the rural South frequently struggled to find good and affordable housing in the industrial North.

in the Jim Crow South, anti-black sentiment and discrimination was commonplace. As African Americans poured into the North, angry groups of white citizens formed in Chicago, New York, and other major cities to lobby for laws that would prohibit landlords in their neighborhoods from renting to blacks. Another popular method for keeping blacks out of white residential areas was the “restrictive covenant,” a clause in mortgage agreements that said a homeowner could not sell to specific minorities, including blacks. These covenants were a powerful force of racial discrimination throughout the country, and they endured in some states until the 1960s.

Housing shortages and discriminatory policies, combined with unofficial neighbor-on-neighbor pressure not to sell or rent to African Americans, left

black families with few options for decent housing. With all other doors closed to them, they congregated in poor neighborhoods that had few city services. Many ended up in shoddy, overcrowded tenement buildings that sprouted up in all the major cities. Meanwhile, landlords frequently took full advantage of this housing shortage to charge exorbitant rents to the black migrants.

The steep cost of securing even the most basic lodging forced countless black families to share small apartments with friends and relatives. Some apartments became so overcrowded that migrants would even share beds, with one individual sleeping while another went to work. Social scientists believe that the housing crisis of the late 1910s and 1920s thus played a major factor in the formation of the first black ghettos in America's major cities.

### **Black Organizations Reach Out to the Migrants**

In the early years of the First Great Migration, several African-American organizations were formed to aid black migrants in facing the challenges of the unfamiliar urban environment they had entered. These organizations helped them find work, housing, and a sense of belonging in their new surroundings.

*According to Alain Locke, African Americans migrated north to pursue “a new vision of opportunity or social and economic freedom.”*

One of the most prominent of these groups was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which was founded in 1909 by W. E. B. Du Bois and others in response to the racial injustice in the nation. The NAACP offered legal and economic help to black migrants, and it used its magazine, *The Crisis*, to document—and crusade against—racism and racist policies in both the North and South. Another important group was the Urban League. It was founded in 1911 in New York City to fight racism and increase opportunity for African Americans, especially those moving to New York as part of the Great Migration. The league eventually established offices in most urban centers of the North, providing help with jobs, housing, and other adjustments related to relocation.

As they had done since the earliest days of the Migration, African-American churches also offered help to black individuals and families arriving in the North. The largest mainstream churches serving the black community were the AME and Baptist denominations, but a growing number of Pentacostal congregations in large urban areas also provided assistance and a sense



of community to migrants. These small, evangelical denominations were often called “storefront” churches, because they frequently held services in vacant buildings in black neighborhoods.

### **Reaction from the White and Ethnic Communities**

When African Americans arrived at their northern destinations, they often met with resistance and outright hostility from the immigrants who already lived in those cities. From 1870 to 1915, some 25 million European immigrants had settled in the United States, and by the time of the first Great Migration, they made up 25 percent of the nation’s workers. Blacks often applied for jobs in industries that were dominated by immigrant workers, who accurately perceived African-American migrants as a potential threat to their livelihoods.

The two groups, migrant and immigrant, were in effect competing for the same jobs. In many cities, immigrants had been relegated to dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs at the lowest rung of the economic ladder. Business owners quickly learned, however, that southern blacks were willing to work for even lower wages—a fact that undercut the earnings of some immigrants. As factory owners learned to play the two groups against each other for wage concessions, anger and resentment among the immigrant workers steadily increased.

Black migrants also were given the cold shoulder by labor unions. The major labor unions had accepted the immigrants into their membership, but many of them banned blacks from joining. This stance sometimes worked to the advantage of management. For example, African Americans who were excluded from unions were often hired to keep factories running during labor strikes. Their role as strikebreaking “scab workers” further contributed to tensions with native-born and immigrant white workers. With labor unions closed to them, African Americans sometimes formed their own unions. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, one of the first black unions in the country, was the most prominent of these groups.

### **Race Riots in East St. Louis and Chicago**

As the African-American population grew in the northern industrial cities, the migrants experienced intensifying racial discrimination in many aspects of life. As time went on, white anger and anxiety over the influx of

blacks spilled over into violence with increasing frequency. From 1917 to 1927, twenty-six race riots erupted in northern cities. The best-known of these ugly events occurred in East St. Louis and Chicago, Illinois.

The East St. Louis riot broke out in July 1917 between unionized white workers carrying out a strike at an aluminum plant and African-American workers who had been hired to break their strike. The unionists went to the mayor, demanding that the migration of blacks to their city end. They warned that if the migration did not stop, they would use violence to stop it themselves. Before the mayor could even respond, the riot began. As the unionists left his office, a rumor began to circulate among the crowds of white labor protestors that a black man had shot a local white man. Another rumor circulated that a black man had insulted a white woman—a major offense in the North, just as it was in the Deep South.

These rumors further inflamed tensions in East St. Louis and chaos soon broke out, with mobs of whites attacking blacks. Whites drove through the city's black neighborhoods, shooting at black people and burning their homes. By the time the smoke cleared, 39 blacks and 8 whites were dead, and 6,000 African Americans had lost their homes. The city's all-white police force did nothing to contain the violence. Writing in *The Crisis*, W. E. B. Du Bois described "the massacre of East St. Louis" as another "foul and revolting page [in] the history of all the massacres of the world"<sup>7</sup> (see "The Massacre of East St. Louis," p. 171).

Two years later racial violence erupted in Chicago, where a post-World War I economic downturn had intensified the competition between working-class whites and blacks for jobs and housing. The incident that sparked the riot took place in the waters of Lake Michigan, at a public beach. Several black children swam into an area of the lake that was considered for whites only. Angry whites threw stones at the black children, and one drowned. When African Americans demanded that the white policeman called to the scene arrest the boys who had thrown the stones, he refused. Instead, he arrested a black man, because a white man had complained about him.

The tragedy triggered a race riot that raged for thirteen days across the south and southwest sides of Chicago, where the city's black population was concentrated. Whites attacked blacks; blacks attacked whites. Homes and businesses were burned. By the time the riots ended, 38 people (23 black and 15 white) had lost their lives and another 537 people had been injured. The fact that this horrible event took place in Chicago made the incident even



White rioters search for an African-American target during the Chicago race riot of 1919.

more depressing for African Americans, for the city had long been “famous for its remarkably fair attitude toward its colored citizens,” according to the NAACP’s Walter White.<sup>8</sup> But the racial violence that had erupted in its streets was, for many blacks, far too reminiscent of the South (see “The Chicago Race Riot of 1919,” p. 174).

The Chicago Commission on Race Relations was formed to examine the issues behind the riot and make recommendations. Its massive report—some 818 pages in length—was published in 1922. *The Negro in Chicago* examined many aspects of black migrant life, including housing, employment, education, and recreational facilities. It also discussed the responsibilities of Chicago’s citizens—white and black—to create peace and cooperation between the races. The authors recommended that race relations could be improved by ending segregation in housing and employment. Members also urged whites to make a greater effort to get to know blacks. The recommendations held no political or social force, but they accurately identified urban race relation problems that would continue to grow and fester for decades.

The report also disclosed the results of extensive interviews with African-American migrants. It found that despite the problems that prompted the riots, blacks in Chicago were overwhelmingly satisfied with their lives in the North. They were finding jobs and making more money, and some of them were advancing into the middle class for the first time in their lives. Respondents also indicated—even after the 1919 riots—that they felt much more freedom from white oppression in Chicago than they had ever felt in

the Deep South. Most remained happy with their decision to leave the South and expressed optimism about their future in the North (see “African Americans Praise Life in the North,” p. 181).

The report also exposed a rift within the black community, however. The small number of African Americans who had lived in the northern cities before the Great Migration had established themselves as a tiny but sturdy middle class, earning middle-class wages as postal workers, Pullman porters, servants, and similar positions. Many of them considered the new migrants to be socially and culturally inferior, just as middle-class whites did. Financially secure and established in their communities, these African Americans frequently viewed the migrants as a homogeneous group of poor, illiterate farm workers who needed to be educated by the northern blacks. To this end, they wrote pamphlets of “do’s and don’ts” that were distributed through the African-American churches, the Urban League, and other organizations. Many migrants, though, viewed this assistance as condescending, and they sometimes accused middle-class blacks in the North of engaging in the same stereotyping of which whites were guilty.

### **The Harlem Renaissance**

The First Great Migration also gave birth to the Harlem Renaissance, one of the most enduring and influential artistic movements of the twentieth century. New York City was one of the major destinations of the Great Migration, and African Americans in large numbers settled in the borough of Harlem. During the 1920s they worked together to create a vibrant and exciting community that filled African Americans with pride—and many whites with a blend of fascination and envy.

Artists from many different regions of the South gathered and shared their work in Harlem, including writers Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, and Jean Toomer; musicians Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Bessie Smith; and painters Jacob Lawrence and Aaron Douglas. Though they used different methods to express themselves, each of these gifted individuals documented and celebrated the African-American experience in his or her art. They proved that the lives of blacks, and the experiences of slavery, segregation, and the Great Migration, could provide the inspiration and raw material for the creation of great art.

African-American author and critic Alain Locke wrote an essay titled “The New Negro” in 1925 that examined the First Great Migration and its



Children pose in front of their elementary school in Harlem, circa 1925.

effect on African-American life in general and the Harlem Renaissance in particular. Locke claimed that the migration was more than a response to the needs of northern industry, the collapse of the cotton industry, and the threat of violence from the Ku Klux Klan. He asserted that the Great Migration was driven by a new African American “vision of opportunity or social and economic freedom ... [and] a spirit to seize, even in the face of an extortionist and heavy toil, a chance for the improvement of conditions.” The Harlem Renaissance, he concluded, was a grand union of blacks from every part of the world: from Africa, the Caribbean, the South, the North, the city and the country. “In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination,” he declared.<sup>9</sup>

### Marcus Garvey and the Separatist Movement

The quest for self-determination noted by Locke also provided the foundation for the rise of Marcus Garvey and his movement for black nationalism

## I Am a Negro—and Beautiful!

In 1926 poet Langston Hughes published a famous essay outlining the artistic and historical background of the Harlem Renaissance. In “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” excerpted here, Hughes makes the case for art created by black artists that celebrates African-American life and themes:

One of the most promising of the young Negro poets said to me once, “I want to be a poet—not a Negro poet,” meaning, I believe, “I want to write like a white poet”; meaning subconsciously, “I would like to be a white poet”; meaning behind that, “I would like to be white.” And I was sorry the young man said that, for no great poet has ever been afraid of being himself. And I doubted then that, with his desire to run away spiritually from his race, this boy would ever be a great poet. But this is the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible....

Most of my own poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know. In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz. I am sincere as I know how to be in these poems and yet after every reading I answer questions like these from my own people: Do you think Negroes should always write about Negroes? I wish you wouldn't read some of your poems to white folks. How do you find any thing interesting in a place like a cabaret? Why do you write about black people? You aren't black. What makes you do so many jazz poems?

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Credit: Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates Incorporated. *The Nation*, 1926.  
© 1926 by Langston Hughes.

But jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul—the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world, a world of subway trains, and work, work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain swallowed in a smile.... [To] my mind, it is the duty of the younger Negro artist, if he accepts any duties at all from outsiders, to change through the force of his art that old whispering “I want to be white,” hidden in the aspirations of his people, to “Why should I want to be white? I am a Negro—and beautiful!” ...

Let the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing Blues penetrate the closed ears of the colored near-intellectuals until they listen and perhaps understand. Let Paul Robeson singing *Water Boy*, and Rudolph Fisher writing about the streets of Harlem, and Jean Toomer holding the heart of Georgia in his hands, and Aaron Douglas drawing strange black fantasies cause the smug Negro middle class to turn from their white, respectable, ordinary books and papers to catch a glimmer of their own beauty. We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves.

**Source**

Hughes, Langston. “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” *The Nation*, June 23, 1926. Available online at <http://www.thenation.com/article/negro-artist-and-racial-mountain>.

and separatism. Garvey was born in Jamaica, where he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914. He moved to New York in 1916. During the early years of the Harlem Renaissance he devoted himself to reaching out to the African-American community with a message of racial pride, self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurship.

Unlike other black political leaders, Garvey did not believe that integration was an achievable goal; instead, he urged African Americans to join his organization and move back to Africa, where they would establish their own, all-black nation. He even created a black shipping company, the Black Star Line, to promote the return to Africa among his followers.

Garvey's message of pride in African-American cultural heritage was enormously popular, especially among poor, working-class blacks. During the early 1920s his UNIA attracted more than one million members. But Garvey also had influential critics within the black community. They included such important leaders as Du Bois and Abbott. They urged the U.S. Justice Department to look into Garvey's financial dealings regarding his Black Star Line, which led to his conviction and imprisonment on mail fraud in 1925. By 1927, when Garvey was deported to his native Jamaica, the UNIA had faded away. Garvey later moved to England, where he died in 1940. Although he never realized his goal of creating an African nation for black Americans, he did influence later movements in the black community, including the Nation of Islam and the Black Power movement of the 1960s.

### **African Americans and the New Deal**

In 1929 the U.S. stock market crashed and the country swiftly descended into a terrible economic crisis known as the Great Depression. Millions lost their life savings and their homes, and one-quarter of the population lost their jobs. African Americans were especially hard hit by this crushing economic downturn. By 1932, 56 percent of the nation's African-American population was unemployed, compared with 28 percent of the white population.

When Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt became president in March 1933, white and black Americans alike prayed that he would be able to deliver some measure of relief from the Depression. Their hopes were raised when Roosevelt moved decisively to address the massive unemployment that lay at the root of the country's economic problems. He developed a number of sweeping federal programs, known collectively as the New Deal, to help the





An African-American man working on construction of Douglas Dam in Tennessee, one of numerous Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) projects. The TVA was one of the New Deal programs, which provided work to black and white laborers during the Great Depression.

country get back on its feet. Some of the most prominent of these programs were the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the National Youth Administration (NYA).

The New Deal employment initiatives provided millions of workers for public construction projects that reached across the country. Enrollees in the PWA, TVA, WPA, and other federal programs built hospitals, schools, and housing projects, and improved the nation's infrastructure through the building of highways, harbors, waste treatment plants, and other public projects.

At the outset of the New Deal, African Americans frequently faced discrimination in hiring for the new jobs, especially in the South. One of the rural farming programs was created to employ sharecroppers, for example, but racist farm owners refused to hire black sharecroppers. When African Americans complained about these discriminatory practices directly to the administration, they were ignored.

In 1933 the NAACP, the National Urban League, and other civil rights organizations responded to the situation by forming the Joint Committee on National Recovery. African-American political leaders went to Roosevelt directly to demand equal treatment under the new programs, and their concerns were finally addressed. When Roosevelt signed the bill that created the WPA in 1935, he declared that all individuals who qualified for WPA positions "shall not be discriminated against on any grounds whatsoever." African Americans benefited to a much greater degree when a second wave of New Deal programs were instituted in the mid-1930s. From 1935 to 1939, millions of African Americans found work with the WPA, the NYA, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), and other programs. They also occupied one-third of the public housing created by the New Deal.

Roosevelt also hired a group of outstanding African-American leaders to work in his administration, including educator Mary McLeod Bethune and economist Robert C. Weaver. These officials became unofficially known as Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet." In light of all these advances during Roosevelt's presidency, the political allegiance of black voters underwent a startling shift. By the late 1930s, African Americans who had once voted overwhelmingly for Abraham Lincoln's Republican Party had become one of Roosevelt's most reliable voting blocs.

## Notes

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- <sup>2</sup> "The Great Migration." Available online at: <http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/topic.cfm?migration=8&topic=4>.
- <sup>3</sup> Wilkerson, p. 36.
- <sup>4</sup> "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918." *Journal of Negro History*, October 1919, p. 291.
- <sup>5</sup> Trotter, Joe, Jr. "U.S. Migration/Population." In *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Colin Palmer. Vol. 4, 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006, p. 1441.
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- <sup>7</sup> Du Bois, W. E. B. "The Massacre of East St. Louis." *The Crisis*, September 1917, p. 219.
- <sup>8</sup> White, Walter F. "Chicago and Its Eight Reasons." *The Crisis*, October 1919, p. 293.
- <sup>9</sup> Locke, Alain. "The New Negro." Introduction to *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke. New York: Atheneum, 1968, pp. 3-16.

## Robert S. Abbott (1870-1940)

*Newspaper Publisher, Founder, and Editor of the Chicago Defender*

**R**obert Sengstacke Abbott was born on November 24, 1870, in Frederick, a small town on St. Simon's Island, Georgia. His parents, Thomas and Flora Butler Abbott, were born as slaves. Thomas had been a butler on a local plantation on St. Simon's. After the Civil War he moved to Savannah, Georgia, where he met Flora, who worked as a hairdresser. After they married, they returned to St. Simon's, where Robert was born. Thomas died shortly after Robert's birth, and Flora and Robert returned to Savannah to live.

In Savannah Flora met and married John Sengstacke, a minister and teacher, and Robert became known as Robert Sengstacke. As Robert grew older he attended Beach Institute, a prep school in Savannah. He went on to study at the Hampton Institute, a vocational and academic college that had been founded to educate former slaves. Robert studied printing as well as liberal arts, and when he graduated from Hampton in 1896, he moved to Chicago. Unable to find regular work as a printer because of racial prejudice, he decided to attend law school in the city. He received his degree from Kent College of Law in 1899, around the same time that he changed his name to Robert Sengstacke Abbott.

Abbott worked very hard to establish himself as a lawyer, but he was unable to find a firm that would hire him. He reluctantly fell back on his training as a printer to support himself. After several years of setting type for railroad timetables, Abbott made a decision that led him to play a pivotal role in the Great Migration: he started his own newspaper.

### **Launching the *Chicago Defender***

On May 5, 1905, Abbott published the first issue of his new paper, the *Chicago Defender*. A one-man dynamo, he wrote, edited, arranged, printed,



and distributed the handbill-size newspaper, which was devoted to publishing stories for and about the city's black community. During the next few years he struggled to keep his paper afloat against three other black newspapers in the city. He was greatly aided during this time by his landlady, Henrietta Plumer Lee, who let him use her dining room table as his home office (years later, after the *Chicago Defender* had become a financial success, Abbott bought Lee a house and turned his old apartment building into the paper's offices).

In 1909 Abbott changed the focus of the paper. Taking heed of the hard-hitting "muckraking" journalism of the times, he concentrated on printing investigative stories about the corruption of white officials and the impact of their actions on the black community. His African-American readers responded by buying the paper in the thousands. Abbott had found the key to his success: from that point onward, the *Defender* became Chicago's leading crusader against racial injustice, segregation, and corruption.

One of Abbott's first campaigns was for racial justice for African Americans in the armed services. He printed stories that outlined how blacks in military training camps during World War I (1914-1918) had been subjected to mistreatment and denied promotions to the officer ranks, based solely on their race. This coverage garnered a national readership for the paper and prompted other black newspapers to cover the issue. President Woodrow Wilson, though, was outraged at the *Defender's* embarrassing articles. Wilson and Congress were determined to stifle any opposition to the war or criticism of wartime activities undertaken by the United States. As a result, the Wilson administration tried to intimidate Abbott and other black newspaper publishers by launching investigations into their operations. The black newspapers did not oppose the war; they focused on the injustice of African-American soldiers fighting to secure rights for Europeans that they themselves did not have back at home. But any criticism was enough to anger Wilson and congressional supporters of the war.

Abbott was the central target of these investigations, but he refused to be silent. Instead, he hired new staff to expand the paper's size. Crusading managing editor J. Hockley Smiley was a particularly crucial hire. Working together, Abbott and Smiley transformed the *Defender* into an eight-page, eight-column publication that was just as substantial as the city's "white" newspapers. It even included sections devoted to Sports, Theater, Society, and Editorial, the first time those sections appeared in a black newspaper any-

where in the nation. Under Smiley, Abbott also began to publish large, sensational headlines such as “Lynching—A National Disgrace.”

Perhaps most importantly, Abbott arranged to distribute his paper in the South, where 90 percent of the black population lived in 1910. Using black Pullman Car porters on major railroad lines to deliver the paper throughout the South, including the small towns along the Illinois Central line, Abbott made the *Defender* the most-read and most-influential African-American newspaper in the country.

### The *Defender* and the Great Migration

Unlike most other newspapers of the time, the *Defender* fearlessly covered the racial violence that was being perpetrated against blacks in the South under the discriminatory system of laws and policies known as “Jim Crow.” Abbott devoted particular attention to the murderous behavior of vigilante gangs like the Ku Klux Klan, who were terrorizing African Americans across the South without any fear of legal prosecution. Outraged by conditions in the South, Abbott decided to use his newspaper to urge long-suffering African Americans to migrate to the North, where they could escape the horrors of Jim Crow and build better lives for themselves.

By 1914, when World War I began in Europe, America’s industrial centers of the North were experiencing labor shortages brought about by the high demand for manufactured goods and the sharp decline in the number of European immigrants available for work. Using banner headlines like “The Great Northern Drive,” Abbott announced that the North—and Chicago in particular—was a “Promised Land” for blacks seeking good factory jobs and freedom from Jim Crow bondage. In addition, he introduced features in the *Defender* to help new migrants find transportation, housing, and job-seeking assistance once they reached the northern cities.

The results of the *Defender*’s crusade were astounding. The paper’s daily circulation during the peak years of the First Great Migration (1917 to 1919) reached 250,000 copies, with the overwhelming majority of them sold in the South. In addition, many of these papers were shared with family members, co-workers, or fellow churchgoers. Abbott’s nephew, John Sengstacke, who took over the paper after Abbott’s death, stated that “for every one *Defender* purchased, five to seven others either read or heard it aloud.”<sup>1</sup>

White southerners were furious with the *Defender*, and the paper was banned throughout the region. In Arkansas, a judge issued an injunction banning its circulation. In Alabama, two *Defender* distributors were killed by an angry mob. But the Pullman porters who had distributed the paper continued to smuggle it into African-American neighborhoods throughout the South, getting the word out about the Migration and its promise.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the *Defender* was even more successful in spurring African-American migration than the labor agents for northern industrial firms, who had been sent to the South specifically to encourage black workers to take jobs in the North. Abbott's newspaper, explained the report's authors, "sums up the Negro's troubles and keeps them constantly before him, and it points out in terms he can understand the way to escape."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one of the most crucial elements of the *Defender's* appeal was that it was written for working-class African Americans.

### **The *Defender* Ends Its Great Migration Campaign**

Abbott's migration drive was wildly successful. The black population in Chicago grew by 110,000 between 1916 and 1918 alone. After the end of the war in 1918, however, the North became less welcoming to black migrants. Hundreds of thousands of white military veterans returned to Chicago and other northern cities to find that their jobs and their neighborhoods were now occupied by African Americans. The resulting competition for jobs and housing sparked race riots across the country, including a deadly uprising in Chicago that left 23 blacks and 15 whites dead, and more than 500 people wounded.

The riots led to the end of the *Defender's* campaign promoting migration and Chicago as the Promised Land. The combination of the return of military veterans, the competition for jobs, and the ensuing racial tensions ended Abbott's vision of the Great Migration as the sure cure for racism. Yet he continued to be an unabashed advocate for civil rights for African Americans, and his paper continued to be one of the most important and influential black newspapers in the country. He remained one of the most respected African-American leaders in the country, as well as one of the first self-made millionaires from the black community. When Abbott died on February 29, 1940, the *Defender* came under the editorial control of his nephew, John Sengstacke, who continued to advocate for racial equality, championing equal treatment for blacks in the military and throughout American society.

Today, the name of Robert S. Abbott is not widely recognized. But he is regarded by historians as one of the most influential and innovative voices in twentieth-century black journalism. Indeed, his early advocacy for civil rights—and for the Great Migration as a means to obtaining those rights for black Americans—have established him as an enduring figure in African-American history.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> DeSantis, Alan. "A Forgotten Leader: Robert S. Abbott and the *Chicago Defender* from 1910-1920." *Journalism History*, Summer 1997, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> DeSantis, p. 66.



## An African-American Migrant Builds a New Life in the North

*Sam Moore was born on April 1, 1932, in Texarkana, Texas. Raised in a small town outside of Texarkana, he became part of the Second Great Migration when he moved to Detroit, Michigan, in 1953. The following excerpted interview of Moore was conducted by Keena Arrington. It is part of Marygrove College's Novak Digital Interview Collection: Detroit Immigration Series. In the interview, which was conducted on March 6, 2008, Moore relates how he rose from a position of poverty to become a successful businessman and then a bishop at the Mt. Sinai House of Prayer in Detroit.*

**M**oore: [Around 1953], I thought about migrating to a bigger city. At that time I was making about thirty-two dollars a week at this plant. Thought about where I would go and I thought about California, I thought about Georgia, I thought about Ohio, I thought about Detroit. I thought about lots of towns and states that I could go to, but I had a cousin come to Detroit. And he wrote me a letter and told me about how good things were in Detroit. Job[s] [were] plentiful, the factory was hiring...

[In 1953] I moved to Detroit... I didn't know anything about it, but this is where I wanted to come. And when I got here and seen streetcars and buses and the train and a whole lot of people. I feel good because I feel kind of like I was ... in the Promised Land. I seen plenty of food. I seen birds, I seen people working had good job[s], taking their lunch kit to work and everything. So it made me feel good so I began to look around in the city to see where I could relocate myself....

[I left] to better myself. And to help my mother you know, because she and my stepfather were struggling with eight children there at home and they didn't have.... I was one of the breadwinners and I was the oldest boy so I was trying to take care. Keep my sisters and brothers in school and try to get them to be educated so I come to Detroit so I could get a better job so I could do that.

Now Detroit, when I got here, I never seen a city so big. I never seen a city in my life that was so big.... But in this city I didn't know how to survive

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Credit: Arrington, K. (Interviewer) & Moore, S. (Interviewee). (2008). Sam Moore: Migration within U.S. [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from The John Novak Digital Interview Collection of the Marygrove College Library Web site: <http://research.marygrove.edu/novakinterviews/index.html>. Reprinted by permission.

so I began to question around. They told me about Black Bottom [a mostly African-American neighborhood in Detroit]. When I got to Black Bottom I felt a little more comfortable because I seen Negroes there. That's what we was called then, Negroes....

Yeah, when I got to Detroit I was a Negro. And that sounded good to me, that's better than what they was calling me [back in the South] I thought. And so I was a Negro, until after awhile they gave us another name. We were called a black. I'm black and proud, so I felt good about myself. I began to see I could feel proud, I'm black. Before I was kind of looking down on myself because I looked at the other race of people.... All the races seemed to be a prosperous race but the Negro was the one that had the dirty jobs, got the less pay, and lived in the slum areas and everything was down. When I was down there [in the South] we looked out for one another, we helped one another, we supported one another....

But when I come to the city, I found out we killed each other, we fought each other, we stole from each other, we robbed each other. Especially in Black Bottom....

Moving to the city of Detroit, at that time it was around in August, and they used to lay peoples off, they called it a changeover in the factory. I was here during that time and I was unable to find employment, unable to find work. I walked the streets in Detroit until I ran out.... When I come here I had sixteen dollars. I paid I think about two dollars a week for a room. So after about a month you know, I was ... no place to stay, so I become homeless and I walked the streets. I slept in the streets. I slept on the side of the streets. And to eat? Well I would get what I could get by walking, seeing stuff thrown away or something like that or something that they didn't want like some food or something. I was able to eat, but I was looking for a job and it was hard for me to locate a job. I got a letter from my mother and she said, she could always sense that when I was in trouble, she said, "Son, come on back home. We can make it here." So I told her, "No, I'm gonna stay on here cause I'm gonna get a job and I wanna help ya."

So what I did, I was sleeping in these places and one old gentleman came up and he seen me. No clothes on hardly, raggly, dirty, needed a bath because no place to clean myself up ... and he asked me did I want work and I told him yes. So that was about, I would say that was about twenty, thirty miles out of the city, so we caught a bus and we rolled out there. I got this job but I

had to live on the job. I worked in the front of the place and I lived in the back of it. They used to have bowling alleys. When I come here people were doing lots of bowling. And I worked with this man, he was called a pin captain. Then he give me a job of setting pins....

It wasn't that much money. It was enough to survive. Some days I make a dollar fifty, some days I make two dollars, some days three dollars and good was four dollars a day. So that was really good money. So I stayed there, I didn't have to pay no rent or nothing. I just slept and stayed right in the back of this old building that I was working in. I stayed there and I would send my mother, every week I'd send my mother money back home. I was around twenty or twenty-one at that time. I thought since I come to the city, I seen in the paper, I seen how things were, it seemed like it was good and jobs were plentiful, but I stayed there and kept on being blessed over the little that I did get.

And so one guy came by that place-bowling alley and asked if I wanted a job, a landscape job. And he was going to pay me, I thought he was going to pay me a dollar and twenty-five cents an hour because that's what they was getting in the factory, but he only gave me seventy-five cent. Sixty or seventy-five cent an hour to work for him. So I take that job and I did landscape work for him. And I sent my money back [to family down South]. I wasn't keeping anything for myself....

The man now, he is deceased, but I learned so much from that man. He was a white man and I never had a white man that treat me like that white man did. That white man treat me like I was his son. I sit down, I ate with him. We worked side by side and he taught me landscape work, how to do job, how to name the plants and everything. And so I worked for him, but I always sent my money back home. And he said to me, he said, "Sam, don't send your money back home. You take the money and get yourself something." So I listened to him, but I was still sending money back to my parents. And I worked for this man for approximately nine years, so after I started working with him, about a year after I started working with him I was able to save up enough money at that point to buy me another car.

I had met this young lady while I was in Texas. We went to school together. And I met her and I thought that we would get married. And so we kept on writing each other. She was still in Texas and I was here so we decided, I proposed to her in a letter and she accepted my proposal. And that was one of the happiest things [in] my life....

So I went back and this beautiful lady ... and I proposed to her and we got married. Brought her [back to Detroit], drove her up, and didn't even have a place to stay. So we slept in the car, you know. Which wasn't comfortable, but listen, we was together. We stayed in the car and somebody seen us sleeping in the car and they offered us their room, saying, "You all sleep in my room. I'll go some other place, find some place to sleep." So we slept in the room until I made a couple paychecks, because I worked with the landscape guy. Then we went and we rented a room and that's where we stayed there for awhile.

After we stayed there for awhile the Lord began to bless us. I learned how to survive. I learned how to be a father. I learned how to be a husband and I learned my responsibility, but I needed more money. I never had anything up to that point that mattered. I looked at other people, had cars. They had their own homes. So I told my wife, "We're gonna get us a place." So we moved out of that room into a three room, little bitty house....

*[Over the next eight years they had three children.]*

So now I'm looking for a house for us, and we found this house, we rented this place first. And I'm still working with this guy. I'm making now good money. I'm bringing home about thirty-seven, or thirty-eight dollars a week. From the landscaping company I'm working for. And this was good money, because when I get paid, I get home that thirty-two dollars everything was taken out. And we go to the grocery store our grocery, whole week's supply of groceries cost us sixteen dollars, so we go in and buy the groceries and we had enough groceries. We had extra money left over....

I was working with this guy—he had some choice accounts.... with big people. And I learned about a lot of these executives such as the president of General Motor[s], the president of Ford, some big doctors, some big lawyers. That's who he had, these big people, and these people sort of favored me, and they liked my work. I'd do extra work for them around there you know, and they favored me. This one gentleman named John Dykstra, he was the president of the Ford Motor Company at that time, lived out there in Bloomfield. And I worked for the Fishers [a famous family in the automotive industry] ... and so I met all these people. But this one gentleman seemed that he favored me. He said to me, "Sam, why are you working for this man like you're working and he making all this money and you just getting a salary and you out here working?" And I told him, "I would like to go in business, but I don't have no money to go in business. I didn't have no money to buy the equip-

ment, I didn't have no money—I didn't have no customers. I didn't know nobody." So he said, "I tell you what you do. You go out and get a price on everything that you would need, all your equipment and come back and let me know and I'll let you have the money."

This guy was a millionaire. You know. But he trusted me. So I went out, I applied me a good truck. I applied me some lawn equipment. I priced me all this stuff. I went and priced me some fertilizer and everything that I would need to start in the business. When I come back to his house, he was down in Florida, he had a home in Florida too. So his daughter said, "Daddy's out of town. When you come back to write him and let him know what you need, how much money you need. He will send it to you." So I did. I wrote him a letter and told him about the equipment I'd picked out and this is what it costs and this is the total amount. So about a few days later I got a check from Florida from John Dykstra. More money than I ever had in my life, you know. But he trusted me.... I taken this money and I did exactly what I planned to do. Went out and bought me a truck. He was my customer, my only first customer. And I bought me a truck, got all this equipment and stuff and started to work on his premises. And I looked at other's people's work and I tried to make my job look better than the next person. So by my job looking better than the next person's job looked, these people called me to do they job. And it was from mouth to mouth. I got the whole block, the whole village....

I'm growing now financially. I'm making some money. But I realize I could make more money if I had more equipment. I learned that I could buy a bigger piece of equipment and make even more money. So this man was so nice to me, I thought he was one of the nicest [people] in the world. I went to him, I said to him, "I need to buy me some bigger equipment." This gentleman was so nice to me until he just disappointed me. He said, "Sam," he said, "You's a man. You got your own business. I'm trying to teach you." He said, "You go now and make your own arrangement. You go and buy your own equipment. You go and get your own job. You can't depend on me. I just help you to get started." And that was a letdown to me. But the first place I went to where they had this equipment, right away, boom, they let me have it. I went to the next place and got I don't know how much fertilizer. They just let me have it. But if he never pushed me out there, I never would have made it. I would have always been dependent on him....

So, I got my business going and I was making money, dealing with these people. And I felt then I forgot about where I come from. I forgot about—I used to not have anything. I forgot about I had no clothes. I forgot about I had no food. I forgot about, you know, these things. But I was feeling fine in the city, making it. We bought us a nice home, a nice home. And I had another feeling in my life. A strange feeling that come over me that I didn't understand. And I fought it for years. And there was a calling on my life.

As far as reaching out, helping the needy, helping the less fortunate. I could look back and remember when I didn't have shoes, when I didn't have clothes, when I didn't have money. And I seen these people ... and I wanted to do something to help the people. And the Lord called me into the ministry because I seen that they need teaching also.

And I taught people how to live. I taught people how to make money. Be honest.... Detroit was a big city, and Detroit was a wicked city.

**Interviewer:** Did you say wicked?

**Moore:** It was a city that you couldn't trust anybody. So I seen that we as Negroes needed some help, needed to be taught and need to go to school. So I began to teach them. Go to school, finish school, be educated. You know, learn something, be somebody. You're just as good as anybody. You don't have to take the low seat. You don't have to walk the streets. You don't have to become a bum—just because you can get all this knowledge, all this education and be somebody.

So this is what I began to teach and it led into my ministry as far as preaching.

**Interviewer:** And this is how you became where you are right now.

**Moore:** This is how I became what I am today.

### **Source**

Moore, Sam. Interview with Keena Arrington. March 6, 2008. Marygrove College, Novak Digital Interview Collection: Detroit Immigration Series. Available online at <http://research.marygrove.edu/novakinterviews/index.html>.

# IMPORTANT PEOPLE, PLACES, AND TERMS

## **Abbott, Robert S. (1868-1940)**

African-American newspaper publisher and founder of the *Chicago Defender*.

## **Black Nationalism**

Political movement of the 1920s that promoted black separatism. It was very influential in the formation of the ideology of the Nation of Islam and other radical African-American political movements.

## **Boycott**

The refusal to buy or use products or otherwise deal with businesses or other institutions as a way to protest the policies of those institutions.

## **Bradley, Tom (1917-1998)**

African-American politician and first black mayor of Los Angeles.

## ***Brown v. Board of Education***

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court case from 1954 that ended legalized segregation in public schools and launched the Civil Rights Movement.

## ***Chicago Defender***

Newspaper founded in 1905 by Robert S. Abbott that advocated for civil rights and promoted the Great Migration to southern blacks.

## **Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964, this legislation prohibited discrimination in public facilities, employment, and education, and ended federal aid to segregated institutions.

## **Civil Rights Movement**

General term for the political and social movement of the 1950s and 1960s to win equal rights for African Americans.

# CHRONOLOGY

**1607**

English settlers land in what is today Chesapeake Bay, Virginia, and establish the colony of Jamestown.

**1619**

The first African slaves are transported to North America.

**1641**

The Massachusetts Bay Colony legalizes slavery.

**1776**

The thirteen colonies of the United States of America declare their independence from England.

**1781**

The Revolutionary War ends with an American victory; in 1783, the Treaty of Paris is signed, officially ending the war and granting the United States new territories to the west as far as the Mississippi River.

**1787**

The U.S. Congress ratifies the Constitution.

**1820**

Congress passes the so-called Missouri Compromise in an effort to stem the rising animosity between the North and South regarding the extension of slavery into new states.

**1850**

Congress enacts the Fugitive Slave Law, which requires the U.S. government to actively assist slave owners in recapturing their runaway slaves. The law also compels citizens of Northern states to assist in the capture of any fugitive in their midst.

**1857**

The U.S. Supreme Court hands down the notorious *Dred Scott* decision. The Court rules that the Missouri Compromise is unconstitutional because the federal government does not have the power to prohibit slavery in its territories. In addition, the



# SOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience. Available online at <http://www.inmotionaame.org>. A monumental undertaking, created and maintained by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, In Motion includes more than 16,500 pages of text and 8,300 illustrations, as well as maps and extensive bibliographies. It covers thirteen African-American migrations, from the sixteenth century to the present, including the transatlantic slave trade, the First and Second Great Migrations, the Return Migration, and the migrations of African people to the Caribbean Islands.

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