

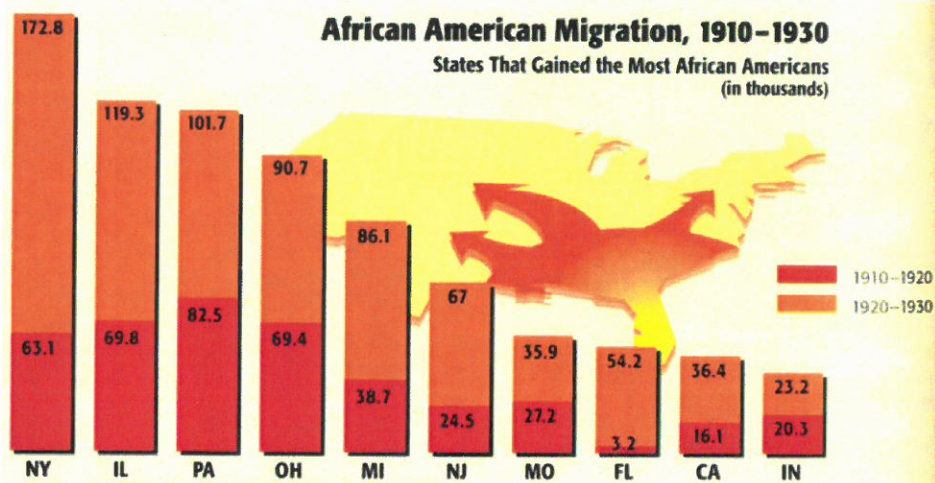
## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### Document 2A

**1910s:** Great Migration begins: As transportation networks enlarge and northern industrialists recruited black laborers from the South, opportunities for blacks expanded. Moving to new jobs and away from the terror of Jim Crow proved attractive to millions of southern blacks, and the wave of internal migration changed the populations of urban centers such as New York City, Chicago, and Detroit and provided new upward mobility and educational opportunities. The Great Migration had an extra burst of energy during the World War I because of the availability of wartime jobs, but this first wave continued through to 1930.

## The Great Migration

Thousands of African Americans began moving from the rural South to northern cities in the 1890s. They were seeking better jobs. This movement, known as the Great Migration, reached its peak during World War I and the 1920s.



### Geography Skills

#### Interpreting Bar Graphs

1. Which state listed had the smallest increase in its African American population between 1910 and 1920?
2. **Human Systems** Which states' African American population increased by more than 100,000 between 1910 and 1930? By more than 200,000?
3. **Summarizing** Use the information presented on this bar graph to create a map of the United States showing the states whose African American population grew the most by 1930.

### History Note 2

Although the Great Migration began in the 1890s, more than 80 percent of African Americans still lived in the South as late as 1910. Beginning in 1910, however, even more African Americans began moving to northern and western cities. The Great Migration changed the nation's population dramatically. In 1930 Chicago, Detroit, and New York had African American populations three times greater than they had in 1910. Today about half of all African Americans live outside the South.

### History Note 3

During the 1930s many African Americans had hoped to find better opportunities in the North. However, during the Great Depression northern cities experienced high unemployment and poverty. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People fought to ensure equal treatment for African Americans during these hard times.

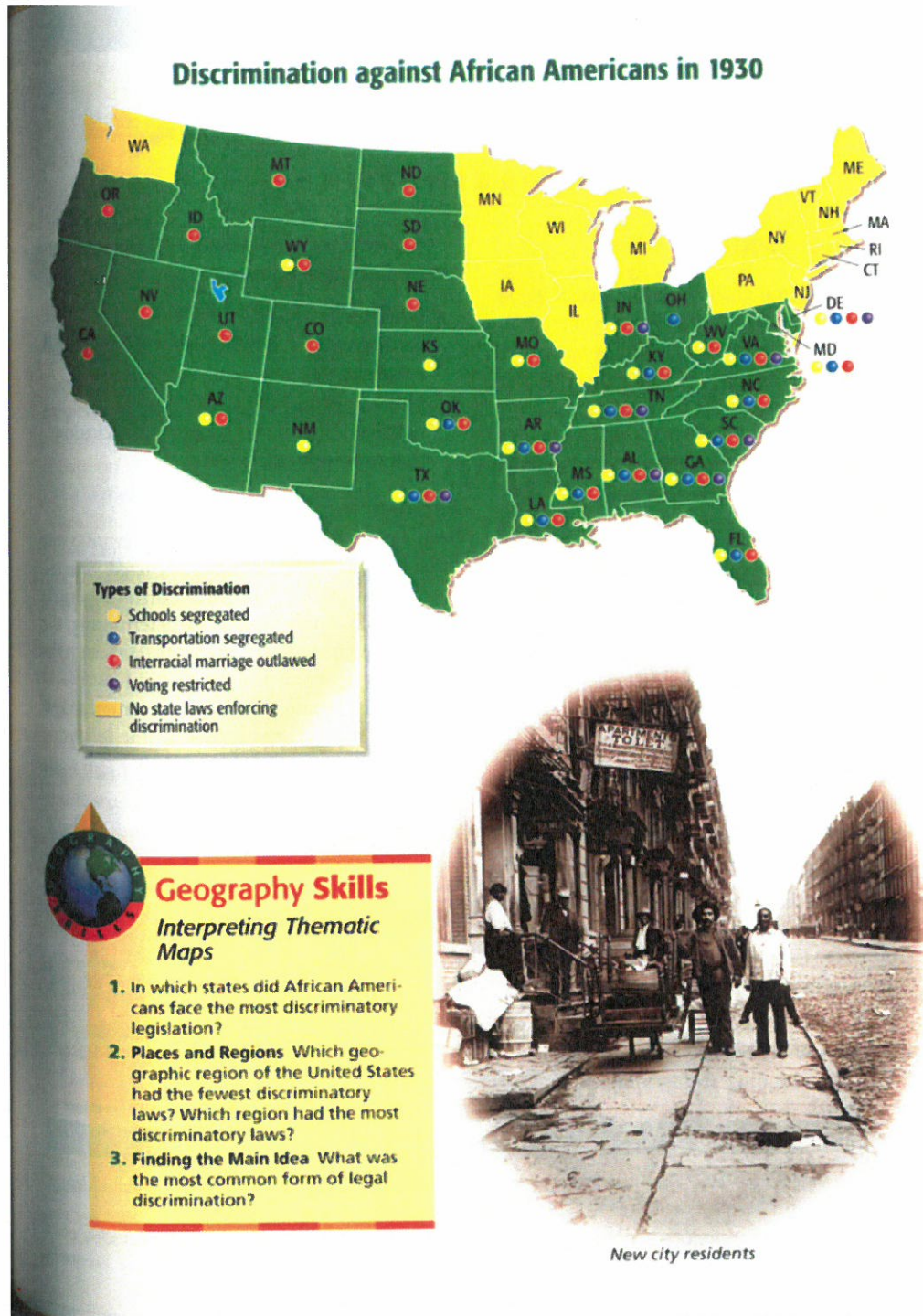


In 1912 this African American family moved to Chicago from the rural South.



## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### Document 2B



### Document 2C

**1917:** East St. Louis Riot: Competition for jobs between newly arrived black Southerners and local whites raised tensions in the city, and violence erupted. After two months of sporadic riots, thousands of whites formed a mob and attacked the black neighborhood, lynching and murdering around 200 people, and destroying their homes and businesses.

## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### Document 2D

*The following is an excerpt from a Chicago newspaper which reports the violence that led up to and ensued during the 1919 Chicago race riots.*

*NOTE: Some of the ways African-Americans are referred to (ex: colored) is an aspect of the time period but not a term that should be used today.*

“Report Two Killed, Fifty Hurt, in Race Riots,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 July 1919.

Two colored men are reported to have been killed and approximately fifty whites and negroes injured, a number probably fatally, in race riots that broke out at south side beaches yesterday. The rioting spread through the black belt and by midnight had thrown the entire south side into a state of turmoil.

Among the known wounded are four policemen of the Cottage Grove avenue station, two from west side stations, one fireman of engine company No. 9, and three women.

One Negro was knocked off a raft at the Twenty-ninth street beach after he had been stoned by whites. He drowned because whites are said to have frustrated attempts of colored bathers to rescue him. The body was recovered, but could not be identified.

A colored rioter is said to have died from wounds inflicted by Policeman John O'Brien, who fired into a mob at Twenty-ninth street and Cottage Grove avenue. The body, it is said, was spirited away by colored men.

### **Drag Negroes from Cars.**

So serious was the trouble throughout the district that Acting Chief of Police Alcock was unable to place an estimate on the injured. Scores received cuts and bruises from flying stones and rocks, but went to their homes for medical attention.

Minor rioting continued through the night all over the south side. Negroes who were found in street cars were dragged to the street and beaten.

They were first ordered to the street by white men and if they refused the trolley was jerked off the wires.

Scores of conflicts between the whites and blacks were reported at south side stations and reserves were ordered to stand guard on all important street corners. Some of the fighting took place four miles from the scene of the afternoon riots.

When the Cottage Grove avenue station received a report that several had drowned in the lake during the beach outbreak. Capt. Joseph Mullen assigned policemen to drag the lake with grappling hooks. The body of a colored man was recovered, but was not identified.



## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### **Document 2D – Continued**

...Racial feeling, which had been on par with the weather during the day took fire shortly after 5 o'clock when white bathers at the Twenty-ninth street improvised beach saw a colored boy on a raft paddling into what they termed "white" territory.

A snarl of protest went up from the whites and soon a volley of rocks and stones were sent in his direction. One rock, said to have been thrown by George Stauber of 2904 Cottage Grove avenue, struck the lad and he toppled into the water...

### **Cop Refuses to Interfere.**

Colored men who were present attempted to go to his rescue, but they were kept back by the whites, it is said. Colored men and women, it is alleged, asked Policeman Dan Callahan of the Cottage Grove station to arrest Stauber, but he is said to have refused.

Then, indignant at the conduct of the policeman, the Negroes set upon Stauber and commenced to pommel him. The whites came to his rescue and then the battle royal was on. Fists flew and rocks were hurled. Bathers from the colored Twenty-fifth street beach were attracted to the scene of the battling and aided their comrades in driving the whites into the water.

### **Reserves Called Out.**

In less than a half hour after the beach outbreak, Cottage Grove avenue and State street from Twenty-ninth south to Thirty-fifth were bubbling cauldrons of action.

When the situation had gotten beyond the control of the Cottage Grove police, Acting Chief of Police Alcock was notified. He immediately sent out a call to every station in the city to rush all available men to the black belt.

Before they arrived colored and white men were mobbed in turn. The blacks added to the racial feeling by carrying guns and brandishing knives. It was not until the reserves arrived that the rioting was quelled.

### **Whites Arm Selves.**

News of the afternoon doings had spread through all parts of the south side by nightfall, and whites stood at all prominent corners ready to avenge the beatings their brethren had received. Along Halsted and State streets they were armed with clubs, and every Negro who appeared was pummeled.

Lewis Phillips, colored, was riding in a Thirty-ninth street car, when a white man took a pot shot from the corner as the car neared Halsted street. Phillips was wounded... Melvin Davies, colored, of 2816 Cottage Grove avenue, was waiting for a Thirty-fifth street car at Parnell avenue when he was slugged from behind. His assailants disappeared.

## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### Document 2E

*Lynching* → killing someone, especially by hanging, for an alleged offense with or without a legal trial; often done by a lynch mob (group of people intent on doing this act of hate)

Townpeople pose with the body of **A MAN LYNCHED IN LAWRENCEVILLE, GEORGIA**, after he was accused of assaulting a white woman around 1910.



More African Americans were lynched in the first two decades of the twentieth century than in any other time in U.S. history.

African American men and teenage boys were lynched more often than women or girls. The typical pattern was for an unnamed source to leak information that an African American male seemed to be too familiar with a white woman. That night a band of white thugs (often members of the Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacy group) would come to lynch the boy or man. This murderous action sometimes resulted from a simple sideways glance at a white woman. Usually, a prejudiced white with a grudge faked the claim of an offense.

The 1905 novel *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* by southerner Thomas Dixon fueled the flames of racial hatred. The novel heightened fears among southerners about out-of-control freedmen (former slaves) threatening the safety of white families. The book's popularity—and later, its adaptation into a movie—planted the seeds for expanding the Ku Klux Klan.

### Lynching in America

Number of black and white citizens lynched, 1885-1960



The number of violent acts against African Americans accelerated during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) began compiling lynching statistics in 1912, thirty years after the *Chicago Tribune* and twenty years after the Tuskegee Institute started tracking such crimes. In November 1922, the NAACP ran full page ads in newspapers pressing for the passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. Entitled "The Shame of America," the ad laid out the shocking statistics of lynching from 1899 through 1922. The bill was passed by a two-to-one majority in the House of Representatives but was defeated in the Senate. A few years later, the NAACP issued the statistics as a broadside. Entitled "For the Good of America," it encouraged citizens to "aid the organization which has been fighting for ten years to wipe out our shame." Despite the NAACP's vigorous efforts through the 1930s and the introduction of several subsequent bills, the US Congress never outlawed lynching.

Purple → White  
Blue → African-American

Source: "Lynchings. By State and Race, 1882-1968". Statistics provided by the Archives at the Tuskegee Institute.  
© The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History



## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### Document 2F

**1920:** Harlem Renaissance Begins: As a result of the Great Migration, the economic opportunities of World War I, and the demographic concentration of an ambitious, black middle class, a wave of African American music, literature, poetry, and fine art swells out of Harlem and other urban cores. The new works depict uplifting images of a "new negro" - an intellectual, productive, proud, modern, and sophisticated identity that inspires and replaces damaging racist stereotypes. The Harlem Renaissance continues through to the mid 1930s, and inspires a generation of civil rights activists.

# Black and Beautiful

In the 1920s, the New York City neighborhood of Harlem became a center of black American life and culture. Sometimes it seemed that the whole world was on its way to Harlem. Young black writers from all across the United States came to talk and to write. Their stories were published in the new black literary magazines. Jazz musicians, dancers, and singers took the train north from New Orleans or Memphis. White novelists and composers came to hear the rhythms

of black speech and music. And rich New Yorkers dressed up to visit Harlem night spots like the famous Cotton Club.

### The Harlem Renaissance

It was all a part of what is today called the "Harlem Renaissance" - an outpouring of creativity from black writers, poets, composers, and performers of the 1920s. When Americans think of "black pride" today, they think of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and beyond. But another kind of pride grew in the Harlem of the 1920s.

Music, especially jazz, was an important part of Harlem's creative life. Jazz was the theme music of the 1920s.

Black performers Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington played jazz in the Harlem nightclubs; white

**Louis Armstrong (left) was a great jazz musician who rose to fame in the 1920s. He and other jazz legends such as Duke Ellington (below, with the Washingtonians) played their music in Harlem nightclubs during the 1920s.**





## African-American Experiences in the 1920s

### Document 2F - Continued



**Langston Hughes (above left) used the rhythms of jazz and the patterns of black speech to create a new style of poetry. Bessie Smith (above right), the "Empress of the Blues," sold millions of records in the 1920s.**

composer George Gershwin played it at Carnegie Hall. Jazz became a link between black America and white America. While their parents might go to Harlem to hear jazz, American teenagers danced to jazz tunes played by white orchestras.

#### **Writers and Questions**

Up the stairs or around the corner from the jazz clubs, young black writers were meeting together and asking important questions: Should I write like whites, or should I draw from black folklore and speech patterns? Should I write honestly about black life, or should I show white

readers only what I would be proud for them to see? Writers found different answers. Countee Cullen and Claude McKay wrote powerful poems about black life and emotions – but they used the language and forms of “white” poetry. Poet Langston Hughes went in another direction. He used black speech patterns and “blues” rhythms in his poetry. To some, Hughes’s poems seemed closer to the real experience of black Americans:

I was a red man one time.  
But the white men came.  
I was a black man, too.  
But the white men came.  
They drove me out of the forest.  
They took me away from the jungles.  
I lost my trees.  
I lost my silver moons.  
Now they’ve caged me  
In the circus of civilization.  
Now I herd with the many –  
Caged in the circus of civilization.  
–“Lament for Dark Peoples”

“Why is it important for us to know of . . . the men and women of the Harlem Renaissance?” black novelist John Oliver Killens once asked. Many young black Americans, he said, believe that the black liberation movement began in the 1960s. But there was plenty of “black pride” in 1920s Harlem too. “We need desperately to know that this generation is not the first to produce artists and writers . . . who identified with Africa and proclaimed that Black was beautiful.” ■

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*Check libraries for recordings by musicians who were part of or influenced by the Harlem Renaissance. You should be able to find Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith, and Fats Waller music there.*

### Document 2G

Watch this YouTube video on the Great Migration/Harlem Renaissance.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TfgJnXlaxo>

### Document 2H

Watch this video on the Harlem Renaissance.

<https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/harlemrenaissance/>