

knee than I ever learned in my four years of high school study of American history and in my five and a half years of study at the great University of Michigan. All that study convinces me that the racial discriminations of this bill are un-American. . . .

It must never be forgotten also that the Johnson bill, although it claims to favor the northern and western European peoples only, does so on a basis of comparison with the southern and western European peoples. The Johnson bill cuts down materially the number of immigrants allowed to come from northern and western Europe, the so-called Nordic peoples. . . .

Then I would be true to the principles for which my forefathers fought and true to the real

spirit of the magnificent United States of today. I can not stultify myself by voting for the present bill and overwhelm my country with racial hatreds and racial lines and antagonisms drawn even tighter than they are to-day. [Applause.]

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Congress seek to use the Immigration Act of 1924 to discriminate against immigrants from southern and western Europe?
2. Why did the United States restrict immigration at all?

The Great Black Migration (1917)

One of the most important social developments triggered by World War I was a massive migration of African Americans from the rural South to other regions of the country. Over a half million men, women, and children relocated between 1915 and 1920, and thousands more followed during the 1920s. They left in search of better paying jobs and the hope of greater social equality and political participation. Black newspapers such as the Chicago Defender actively encouraged the exodus. Most of the migrants settled in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, forming African American neighborhoods that became fertile centers of black culture. The following letters from southern blacks requesting information about life in the North poignantly reveal the challenges for those wishing to migrate.

From Emmet J. Scott, ed., "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916–1918," *Journal of Negro History* 4 (July 1, 1919): 290–340.

Palestine, Tex. 1/2/1917—Sir: I hereby enclose you a few lines to find out some things if you will be so kind to word them to me. I am a southerner lad and has never been in the north no further than Texas and I has heard much talk about the north and how much better the colard people are treated up there than down here and I has ben striveing so hard in my coming up and now I see that I cannot get up there without the

ade of some one and I wants to ask you Dear Sir to please direct me in your best manner the step that I shall take to get there and if there are any way that you can help me to get there I am kindly asking for your ade. And if you will ade me please notify me by return mail because I am sure ancious to make it in the north because these southern white people ar so mean and they seems to be getting worse and I wants to get away and they wont pay me in get-

ting up there please give me information how I can get there I would like to get there in the early spring, if I can get there if possible. Our southern white people are so cruel we collard people are almost afraid to walke the streets after night. So please let me hear from you by return mail. I will not say very much in this letter I will tell you more about it when I hear from you please ans. soon.

Newbern, Ala. 4/17/1917—Sir: . . . Doubtless you have learned of the great exodus of our people to the north and west from this and other states. I wish to say that we are forced to go when one thinks of a grown man wages is only fifty to seventy cents per day for all grades of work. He is compelled to go where there is better wages and sociable conditions, believe me. When I say that [at] many places here in this state the only thing that the black man gets is a peck of meal and from three to four lbs. of bacon per week, and he is treated as a slave. As leaders we are powerless for we dare not resent such or to show even the slightest disapproval. Only a few days ago more than 1,000 people left here for the North and West. They cannot stay here. The white man is saying that you must not go, but they are not doing anything by way of assisting the black man to stay. As a minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church I am on the verge of starvation simply because of the above conditions. I shall be glad to know if there is any possible way by which I could be of real service to you as director of your society. Thanking you in advance for an early reply, and for any suggestions that you might be able to offer.

Dapne, Ala., 4/20/17—Sir: I am writing you to let you know that there is 15 or 20 familys wants to come up there at once but cant come on account of money to come with and we cant phone you here we will be killed they dont want us to leave here & say if we dont go to war and fight for our country they are going to kill us and wants to get

away if we can if you send 20 passes there is no doubt that every one of us will com at once. we are not doing any thing here we cant get a living out of what we do now some of these people are farmers and som are cooks barbers and black smiths but the greater part are farmers & good worker & honest people & up to date the trash pile dont want to go no where These are nice people and respectable find a place like that & send passes & we all will come at once we all wants to leave here out of this hard luck place if you cant use us find some place that does need this kind of people we are called Negroes here. I am a reader of the Defender and am delighted to know how times are there & was to glad to, know if we could get some one to pass us away from here to a better land. We work but cant get scarcely any thing for it & they dont want us to go away & there is not much of anything here to do & nothing for it Please find some one that need this kind of a people & send at once for us. We dont want anything but our wareing and bed clothes & have not got no money to get away from here with & beging to get away before we are killed and hope to here from you at once. We cant talk to you over the phone here we are afraid to they dont want to hear one say that he or she wants to leave here if we do we are apt to be killed. They say if we dont go to war they are not going to let us stay here with their folks and it is not any thing that we have done to them.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. According to these accounts, what role did racial discrimination play in provoking southern blacks to migrate to the North?
2. Describe some of the economic hardships faced by blacks in the South.
3. Why might southern elites have wanted blacks to remain in the South?

13.4 quiz

Select the letter of the term, name, or phrase that best matches each description. Note: Some letters may not be used at all. Some may be used more than once.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| a. Bessie Smith | h. Langston Hughes |
| b. Paul Robeson | i. Zora Neale Hurston |
| c. Claude McKay | j. Harlem Renaissance |
| d. Duke Ellington | k. Great Migration |
| e. Marcus Garvey | l. James Weldon Johnson |
| f. W. E. B. Du Bois | m. Universal Negro Improvement Association |
| g. Louis Armstrong | n. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People |

- _____ 1. This black nationalist association was founded by Marcus Garvey.
- _____ 2. This was a literary and artistic movement that celebrated African-American culture.
- _____ 3. Among the founders of this association was W. E. B. Du Bois.
- _____ 4. In 1927, this singer became the highest paid black artist in the world.
- _____ 5. This major dramatic actor's performance in Shakespeare's *Othello* was widely acclaimed.
- _____ 6. In many of her novels, books of folklore, poetry, and short stories, this writer portrayed the lives of poor, unschooled Southern African Americans.
- _____ 7. This jazz pianist and composer won fame as one of America's greatest composers. He wrote such pieces as "Mood Indigo" and "Sophisticated Lady."
- _____ 8. This trumpet player's astounding sense of rhythm and ability to improvise has led many to consider him the single most important and influential musician in the history of jazz.

The Roaring Life of the 1920s**Section 4****The Harlem Renaissance****Terms and Names**

James Weldon Johnson Poet and civil rights leader

Marcus Garvey Black nationalist leader

Harlem Renaissance African-American artistic movement

Claude McKay Poet

Langston Hughes Poet

Zora Neale Hurston Anthropologist and author

Paul Robeson Actor, singer, and civil-rights leader

Louis Armstrong Jazz musician

Duke Ellington Jazz musician

Bessie Smith Blues singer

Before You Read

In the last section, you read about education and popular culture in the 1920s. In this section, you will learn about the Harlem Renaissance.

As You Read

Use a chart to take notes on the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOICES IN THE 1920S (Pages 452–454)**How did African Americans approach civil rights in the 1920s?**

Between 1910 and 1920, hundreds of thousands of African Americans had moved from the South to the big cities of the North. This was called the Great Migration. It was a response to racial violence and economic discrimination against blacks in the South. By 1929, 40 percent of African Americans lived in cities. As a result, racial tensions increased in Northern cities. There were race riots.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) worked to end violence against

African Americans. W. E. B. Du Bois led a peaceful protest against racial violence.

The NAACP also fought to get laws against lynching passed by Congress.

James Weldon Johnson, a poet and lawyer, led that fight. While no law against lynching was passed in the twenties, the number of lynchings gradually dropped.

Marcus Garvey voiced a message of black pride that appealed to many African Americans. Garvey thought that African Americans should build a separate society. He formed a black nationalist group called the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Garvey promoted black-owned businesses. He also urged African

Section 4, *continued*

Americans to return to Africa to set up an independent nation.

1. How did the NAACP and Marcus Garvey's followers respond to racial discrimination?
- _____
- _____

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE FLOWERS IN NEW YORK

(Pages 454–457)

What was the Harlem Renaissance?

In the 1920s, many African Americans moved to Harlem, a section of New York City. So did blacks from the West Indies, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Haiti. Harlem became the world's largest black urban community.

This neighborhood was also the birthplace of the **Harlem Renaissance**. This literary and artistic movement celebrated African-American culture.

Above all, the Harlem Renaissance was a literary movement. It was led by well-educated middle-class blacks. They took pride in their African heritage and their people's folklore. They also wrote about the problems of being black in a white culture. An important collection of works by Harlem Renaissance writers, *The New Negro*, was published by Alain Locke in 1925.

The Harlem Renaissance produced many outstanding poets. **Claude McKay** wrote about the pain of prejudice. He urged African Americans to resist discrimination.

One of the most famous Harlem Renaissance poets was **Langston Hughes**. In the 1920s, he wrote about the daily

lives of working-class blacks. He wove the tempos of jazz and the blues into his poems.

Zora Neale Hurston was the most famous female writer of the Harlem Renaissance. She collected the folklore of poor Southern blacks. Hurston also wrote novels, short stories, and poems.

Music and drama were important parts of the Harlem Renaissance, too. Some African-American performers became popular with white audiences. **Paul Robeson** became an important actor and singer. He starred in Eugene O'Neill's play *The Emperor Jones* and in Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Jazz became more popular in the twenties. Early in the 20th century, musicians in New Orleans blended ragtime and blues into the new sound of jazz. Musicians from New Orleans traveled North, and they brought jazz with them. The most important and influential jazz musician was **Louis Armstrong**.

Many whites came to Harlem to hear jazz in night clubs. Edward Kennedy "**Duke**" **Ellington** led an orchestra there. He was a jazz pianist and one of the nation's greatest composers.

The outstanding singer of the time was **Bessie Smith**. Some black musicians chose to live and perform in Europe. Josephine Baker became a famous dancer, singer, and comedy star in Paris.

2. Describe the contributions of one artist of the Harlem Renaissance.
- _____
- _____

Name _____ Class _____ Date _____

Section 4, *continued*

Name the organization with which each leader was associated. Then note their beliefs and goals as well as the tactics they believed necessary to achieve them.

1. W. E. B. Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson Organization: _____ Beliefs, goals, and tactics: _____	2. Marcus Garvey Organization: _____ Beliefs, goals, and tactics: _____
--	--

Describe briefly what each of the following artists was known for.

African-American Writers
1. Claude McKay
2. Langston Hughes
3. Zora Neale Hurston

African-American Performers
4. Paul Robeson
5. Louis Armstrong
6. Duke Ellington
7. Bessie Smith

Harlem Produces a "New Negro"

Part A. Read the following poems, and compile a list of moods and themes found in each.

We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be otherwise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To Thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh, the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask.²

Sympathy

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!

²Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," reprinted in Abraham Chapman, ed., *Black Voices: An Anthology of Afro-American Literature* (New York: Mentor Books, 1968), 355.

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol for joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!³

Brown River, Smile

The Mississippi, sister of the Ganges,
Main artery of earth in the western world,
Is waiting to become
In the spirit of America, a sacred river.
Whoever lifts the Mississippi
Lifts himself and all America;
Whoever lifts himself
Makes that great brown river smile.
The blood of earth and the blood of man
Course swifter and rejoice when we spiritualize.⁴

Tempo Primo

The New Negro strides upon the continent
In seven-league boots . . .
The New Negro
Who sprang from the vigor-stout loins
Of Nat Turner, gallows-martyr for Freedom,
Of Joseph Cinquez, Black Moses of the Amistad Mutiny,
Of Frederick Douglass, oracle of the Catholic Man,
Of Sojourner Truth, eye and ear of Lincoln's legions,
Of Harriet Tubman, Saint Bernard of the Underground
Railroad.

The New Negro
Breaks the icons of his detractors,
Wipes out the conspiracy of silence,
Speaks to *his* America:
"My history-moulding ancestors
Planted the first crops of wheat on these shores,
Built ships to conquer the seven seas,
Erected the Cotton Empire,
Flung railroads across a hemisphere,
Disemboweled the earth's iron and coal,
Tunneled the mountains and bridged rivers,
Harvested the grain and hewed forests,
Sentined the Thirteen Colonies,
Unfurled Old Glory at the North Pole,
Fought a hundred battles for the Republic."

³Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Sympathy," reprinted in *Ibid.*, 356–57.

⁴From Jean Toomer, "Brown River, Smile," reprinted in *Ibid.*, 379.

its inhibition with the consequent infringement of rights long freely enjoyed. We are constrained to conclude that the statute as applied is arbitrary and without reasonable relation to any end within the competency of the state. As the statute undertakes to interfere only with teaching which involves a modern language, leaving complete freedom as to other matters, there seems no adequate foundation for the suggestion that the purpose was to protect the child's health by limiting his mental activities. It is well known that proficiency in a foreign language seldom comes to one not instructed at an early age, and experience shows that this is not injurious to the health, morals or understanding of the ordinary child....

Questions

1. In what ways did the Supreme Court of Nebraska justify the English-only law?
2. Why does the U.S. Supreme Court see the law as an unreasonable infringement on liberty?

135. Alain Locke, *The New Negro* (1925)

Source: *Alain Locke: Reprinted with the permission of Scribner, a Division of Simon & Schuster Inc., from The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance by Alain Locke. Copyright © 1925 by Albert & Charles Boni, Inc. All rights reserved.*

The migration of blacks from South to North, begun in large numbers during World War I, continued during the 1920s. New York's Harlem became famous for "slumming," as groups of whites visited its dance halls, jazz clubs, and speakeasies in search of exotic adventure. The Harlem of the

white imagination was a place of primitive passions, free from the puritanical restraints of mainstream American culture. The real Harlem was a community of widespread poverty. But it was also the center of rising racial self-consciousness, a growing awareness of the interconnections between black Americans and persons of African descent elsewhere in the world, and a vibrant black cultural community that established links with New York's artistic mainstream. The term "New Negro," associated in politics with pan-Africanism and the militancy of the Garvey movement, in art meant the rejection of established stereotypes and a search for black values to put in their place. *The New Negro*, a book of essays and literary works edited by Alain Locke, came to symbolize the "Harlem Renaissance."

IN THE LAST decade something beyond the watch and guard of statistics has happened in the life of the American Negro and the three norms who have traditionally presided over the Negro problem have a changeling in their laps. The Sociologist, the Philanthropist, the Race-leader are not unaware of the New Negro, but they are at a loss to account for him. He simply cannot be swathed in their formulae. For the younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life.

• • •

With this renewed self-respect and self-dependence, the life of the Negro community is bound to enter a new dynamic phase, the buoyancy from within compensating for whatever pressure there may be of conditions from without. The migrant masses, shifting from countryside to city, hurdle several generations of experience at a leap, but more important, the same thing happens spiritually in the life-attitudes and self-expression of the Young Negro, in his poetry, his art, his education and his new outlook, with the additional advantage, of course, of the poise and greater certainty of

knowing what it is all about. From this comes the promise and warrant of a new leadership. As one of them has discerningly put it:

We have tomorrow

Bright before us

Like a flame.

Yesterday, a night-gone thing

A sun-down name.

And dawn today

Broad arch above the road we came.

We march!

•••

The day of "aunties," "uncles" and "mammies" is equally gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on, and even the "Colonel" and "George" play barnstorm roles from which they escape with relief when the public spotlight is off. The popular melodrama has about played itself out, and it is time to scrap the fictions, garet the bogeys and settle down to a realistic facing of facts.

First we must observe some of the changes which since the traditional lines of opinion were drawn have rendered these quite obsolete. A main change has been, of course, that shifting of the Negro population which has made the Negro problem no longer exclusively or even predominantly Southern.

•••

Here in Manhattan is not merely the largest Negro community in the world, but the first concentration in history of so many diverse elements of Negro life. It has attracted the African, the West Indian, the Negro American; has brought together the Negro of the North and the Negro of the South; the man from the city and the man from the town and village; the peasant, the student, the business man, the professional man, artist, poet, musician, adventurer and worker, preacher and criminal, exploiter and social outcast. Each group has come with its own separate motives and for its own spe-

cial ends, but their greatest experience has been the finding of one another. Proscription and prejudice have thrown these dissimilar elements into a common area of contact and interaction. Within this area, race sympathy and unity have determined a further fusing of sentiment and experience. So what began in terms of segregation becomes more and more, as its elements mix and react, the laboratory of a great race-welding. Hitherto, it must be admitted that American Negroes have been a race more in name than in fact, or to be exact, more in sentiment than in experience. The chief bond between them has been that of a common condition rather than a common consciousness; a problem in common rather than a life in common. In Harlem, Negro life is seizing upon its first chances for group expression and self-determination. It is—or promises at least to be—a race capital. That is why our comparison is taken with those nascent centers of folk-expression and self-determination which are playing a creative part in the world to-day. Without pretense to their political significance, Harlem has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia.

•••

[Two new] interests are racial but in a new and enlarged way. One is the consciousness of acting as the advance-guard of the African peoples in their contact with Twentieth Century civilization; the other, the sense of a mission of rehabilitating the race in world esteem from that loss of prestige for which the fate and conditions of slavery have so largely been responsible. Harlem, as we shall see, is the center of both these movements; she is the home of the Negro's "Zionism." The pulse of the Negro world has begun to beat in Harlem. A Negro Newspaper carrying news material in English, French and Spanish, gathered from all quarters of America, the West Indies and Africa has maintained itself in Harlem for over five years. Two important magazines, both edited from New York, maintain their news and circulation consistently on a cosmopolitan scale. Under American auspices and backing, three pan-African congresses have

been held abroad for the discussion of common interests, colonial questions and the future cooperative development of Africa. In terms of the race question as a world problem, the Negro mind has leapt, so to speak, upon the parapets of prejudice and extended its cramped horizons. In so doing it has linked up with the growing group consciousness of the dark peoples and is gradually learning their common interests. As one of our writers has recently put it: "It is imperative that we understand the white world in its relations to the non-white world." As with the Jew, persecution is making the Negro international.

As a world phenomenon this wider race consciousness is a different thing from the much asserted rising tide of color. Its inevitable causes are not of our making. The consequences are not necessarily damaging to the best interests of civilization. Whether it actually brings into being new Armadas of conflict or argosies of cultural exchange and enlightenment can only be decided by the attitude of the dominant races in an era of critical change. With the American Negro, his new internationalism is primarily an effort to recapture contact with the scattered peoples of African derivation. Garveyism may be a transient, if spectacular, phenomenon, but the possible role of the American Negro in the future development of Africa is one of the most constructive and universally helpful missions that any modern people can lay claim to.

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Questions

1. What does Locke mean when he writes, "the day of 'aunties,' 'uncles' and 'mammies'" is gone?
2. Why does Locke consider Harlem a true "race capital" for blacks?