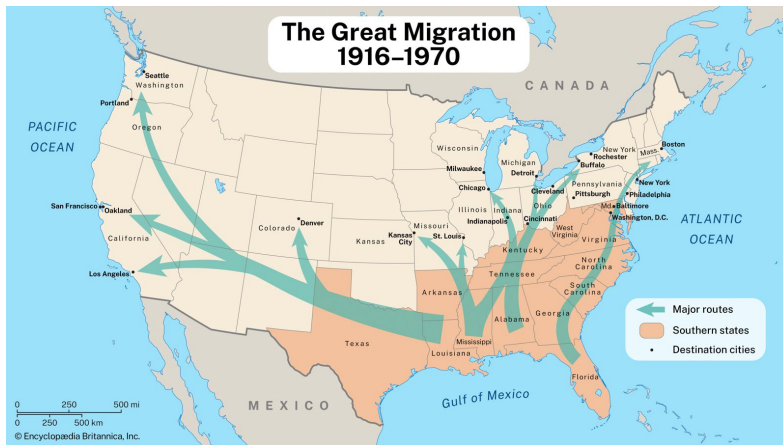


The Great Migration: A History All Americans Should Know



Between about 1916 and 1970, more than six million Black Americans moved from the South to cities in the North and West seeking freedom and economic opportunity, but shockingly many Americans have never heard of monumental migration. This movement changed the landscape of American cities forever by increasing their populations and

reshaping neighborhoods, culture, and daily life. Even so, many Americans are still unaware of this history. Historically, the lives of Black people have been untold and underrepresented in books about American history. This important chapter of American history deserves more attention.

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Black people living in the South desperately wanted to escape racial inequality and persecution and jumped at the opportunity to work at factories in the North, Midwest, and West. Even after the Civil War ended, and Black people were no longer enslaved, they had limited job opportunities. Segregation laws, known as Jim Crow laws, made daily life dangerous and restrictive. Black people in the South continued to farm for very little money, and they felt like they had very few opportunities. At the same time, Northern factories needed workers during World War I, so they started recruiting Black people from the South through newspaper ads. Factories offered to pay approximately three times what Black people made in their farming jobs. People were **enticed** by the possibility of steady work and safer living conditions. They also **aspired** to give a better future to their children. These causes pushed and pulled families out of the South to move to places like Chicago, Detroit, and New York.

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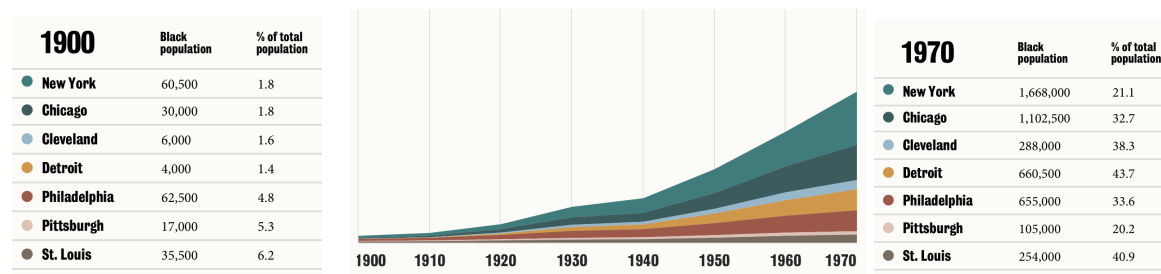
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The Great Migration changed lives in powerful ways. In Northern cities, families found new types of work such as factory work at slaughterhouses, factories, and foundries, and better access to education. Adults earned more money, and Black communities **fostered** hope and cooperation. Life in the North was not perfect, but many people experienced opportunities they had never had before. However, Black migrants also faced serious challenges. Many cities were unprepared for such a large population increase, so housing was overcrowded, rent was extremely expensive, and discrimination continued. Black people were only allowed to live in certain neighborhoods due to racist laws. Instead of giving up, people worked together to find solutions. Families shared living spaces, neighbors helped one another find jobs, and community leaders organized for fair treatment. Through teamwork and determination, migrants were able to survive and slowly **transform** their new communities.



The impact of the Great Migration is still felt today, even though it is often overlooked. As Black Americans settled in new regions, they **transformed** the physical and cultural landscape of American cities forever. Neighborhoods expanded quickly. For example, the population of Chicago was 44,103 at the beginning of the Great Migration and it was over one million by the 1970s. Though Black people escaped the persecution of Jim Crow laws in the South, racist laws prevented them from getting a mortgage and buying houses in their



new homes in the Midwest, North, and West. The lasting impacts of these racist policies have created inequality that still persists today. Strong communities formed around churches, businesses, and social organizations in spite of these racist policies. Music, food, language, and traditions from the South became part of city life, so cities like Chicago, New York, and Detroit developed new cultural identities. Jazz and blues spread to new audiences, and the fight

for civil rights grew stronger as people organized in cities. This history matters because it helps explain how modern American cities were built and changed over time, so learning about the Great Migration helps us better understand the country we live in today.