

# JIM CROW AND THE GREAT MIGRATION

A stylized silhouette of a car, possibly a vintage model, is centered on a dark gray background. The car's body is filled with a complex geometric pattern of triangles and polygons in shades of mustard yellow, brown, and light beige. The wheels are represented by solid circles: the front wheel is blue, and the rear wheel is a mix of blue and light beige. A thick black line outlines the car's profile, including the roof, windows, and wheels. The text "UNIT 4" is printed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a black rectangular background that is part of the car's silhouette, positioned just below the rear window area.

UNIT 4

# UNIT FOUR – Jim Crow And The Great Migration

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# How did Jim Crow reinvent early forms of oppression and how did Black Americans resist it?

Slavery was abolished in 1865 with the end of the Civil War, and Black Americans won hard-fought freedoms through the Reconstruction Amendments, including citizenship and voting rights. However, in an effort to maintain social and economic control over Black people following Reconstruction, repressive *Jim Crow* laws were enacted that segregated Black people and severely restricted their rights and freedoms.

The term Jim Crow originated from a fictional minstrel character created by Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice in 1828. Blackface minstrelsy—which was wildly popular among white audiences throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries—reinforced stereotypical notions of Black people as ignorant, lazy and childlike. In the post-Civil War U.S., such bigotry fixed the idea among many white people that Black people were unable to manage the complexities of full citizenship.

From about 1876 to 1965, every southern state adopted and brutally enforced a system of Jim Crow laws that cemented the inferior status of Black people and controlled virtually every facet of their daily lives. Black people were not allowed to use the same water fountains, bathrooms, restaurant entrances, elevators or train cars as white people. They were not allowed to live in the same neighborhoods, attend the same schools or use the same hospitals or libraries. This cruel

arrangement ensured that Black people remained poor, yet forced them to subsidize the system through taxes for services they could not access. Jim Crow was sustained by public officials who were virtually all white, an electoral process that suppressed the Black vote and a criminal justice system dominated by white officers, judges and juries. Individuals and communities that failed to abide by Jim Crow laws and practices were summarily jailed and habitually victimized by extralegal intimidation and violence by white supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan, White League and Red Shirts.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ostensibly prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude, but contained a loophole that allowed these practices “as a punishment for a crime.” Therefore, mass arrests of Black people under Jim Crow served as a pretext for reenslaving them. Under the convict leasing system, predominantly Black prisoners were sold as forced labor to mining, agricultural, logging, railroad and other interests. Through this system, many Black people ended up back on the plantations where they were previously enslaved. Convict leasing was a boon to private industry by providing a source of cheap and expendable labor, and profited state coffers through the fees collected and the ability to circumvent the costly business of incarceration.

tion. The degrading, inhumane and often deadly conditions under which the mostly Black prisoners labored was so severe that many characterized it as worse than slavery.

After almost a century of Jim Crow, the most flagrant anti-Black violations were dismantled by the decades-long Civil Rights Movement and the bravery of countless activists. The desegregation of schools in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Acts of 1965 righted many of the wrongs of Jim Crow. Despite these changes, inequitable treatment based on race is still prevalent in many areas of American life, including housing, employment, education,

voting and policing. The mass incarceration of Black people today—who make up about 12 percent of the U.S. population and 33 percent of the incarcerated population<sup>1</sup>—has led to concerns about a “new Jim Crow” that controls Black people through the justice system. According to the Center for Law and Justice, “More African Americans are under the control of the criminal justice system today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850.”<sup>2</sup> Such realities make the struggle against Jim Crow a current as well as a historical concern.

1 Gramlich, John. *The gap between the number of blacks and whites in prison is shrinking*. Pew Research Center, 2019. <https://pewrsr.ch/3wRShsq>.

2 Center for Law and Justice. *Summary of The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander*. <http://www.cflj.org/programs/new-jim-crow>.

# THE CRUELTY OF JIM CROW SEGREGATION



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What was Jim Crow and what was life under it like for Black Americans?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define *stereotype* and explain the negative effects of stereotypes on individuals and society.
- Examine the origins of Jim Crow and associated anti-Black stereotypes.
- Analyze primary sources demonstrating ways in which Black people were segregated during the Jim Crow era.
- Discuss ways in which Black people resisted discrimination and worked to end Jim Crow segregation.
- Compose a written reflection on the impact of those who struggled to end segregation.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



## MATERIALS

- *Who Was Jim Crow?* handout (one copy to project)
- *Jim Crow Gallery* handout (one copy per small group)
- *Where Did Jim Crow Segregation Take Place?* handout (one copy to project)



## VOCABULARY

activist

blackface

civil rights

generalization

Jim Crow

minstrel show

segregate/  
segregation

“separate but  
equal”

sit-in

stereotype

# Procedures

## NOTE

While Jim Crow was most prevalent and deeply rooted in the South, segregation was a national problem. Segregation actually existed earlier in the North than in the South, for example on the Massachusetts Eastern Railroad in the 1830s. In the 20th century, federal and local policies led to segregation in public housing and schools throughout the country, and “whites only” policies were enforced in many northern shops, theaters, hotels and restaurants. “Sundown towns” were common in both the North and South, excluding Black people through discriminatory laws, intimidation and signposts literally requiring “colored people” to leave by sundown. In addition to these practices, anti-Black riots and killings happened with regularity in many northern cities. Students should understand that while Jim Crow was most repressive and violent in the South, it wasn’t exclusively a regional problem.

## PART 1

### What is a Stereotype? (20–30 mins.)

- 1 Post the following sentence on the board: “All cities are dangerous.” Ask students if they agree that this is true. Explain that this statement is a *generalization*—it takes a fact that may be true about some cities and applies it to all cities. Ask students what the harm is in making generalizations.
- 2 Write the term *stereotype* on the board. Ask students if they have heard this term and what they think it means. Introduce and discuss the following definition:  
  
Stereotype: a generalization about a person or group without regard for individual differences; the false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way
- 3 Provide an example of a stereotype that you have personally experienced or observed. Make sure students understand that stereotypes are specific to identity groups (e.g., race, religion, gender, etc.), and this term is not used to describe other sorts of generalizations.

## NOTE

Help students understand that seemingly positive stereotypes (e.g., Black people are great athletes) also cause harm by making those who don’t fulfill them feel like failures; not recognizing the efforts of those who do fulfill them; suggesting that we can know things about people based on their group; and inferring that one’s group membership is connected to their intelligence, ability or character.

## NOTE

Avoid creating a long list of negative stereotypes. Allow students to share a few illustrative examples, but try not to overwhelm them with ideas about prejudice that may be new, upsetting or used in ways that hurt others.

4

Have students do reflective writing in response to the prompts below. Afterwards, invite a few volunteers to share their reflections. Discuss why it is so dangerous to believe and spread stereotypes.

- Has a stereotype ever been used to describe you or someone you know? If so, what was the stereotype and how did it make you feel?
- Why are stereotypes a problem? What effects do they have on individuals and communities?

## PART 2

### The Cruelty of Jim Crow Stereotypes and Segregation (90 mins.)

5

Comment that Black people have been subject to harmful stereotypes throughout our nation's history. Project the image on the handout *Who Was Jim Crow?* (but hide the text below it). Explain that in the 1800s, a white actor named Thomas Rice created a Black character named Jim Crow. In pairs or small groups, have students identify some of the stereotypes they observe in the image. Then discuss the following questions:

- What stereotypes does the Jim Crow character communicate? *[Possible responses include that all Black people are foolish, clownish, stupid, lazy, clumsy, poor, raggedy, dirty and dangerous.]*
- How do you think the Jim Crow stereotypes affected the white audiences who watched Rice's shows?
- What actions do you think these stereotypes caused in communities across the nation at this time?

6

Together, read the text at the bottom of the handout *Who Was Jim Crow?* Answer any questions students may have. Ask if they have heard about Jim Crow laws before, and allow them to share examples.

7

Introduce students to John Lewis. Explain that he was a civil rights activist who fought for equal rights from the time he was a student in the 1950s, and was also a U.S. Congressman from Georgia until he died in 2020. Play the video "What was it like growing up in Alabama under Jim Crow?" [1:54]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3p8t-Tij3EoY>. As students watch, ask them to list the different

ways Black people were segregated or separated during the Jim Crow era. After the video, discuss the following:

- What were some of the ways Lewis and other Black people were segregated during Jim Crow? (*List responses on the board.*)
- What was your reaction to Lewis's parents telling him, "Don't get in trouble, don't get in the way"? Why didn't his family encourage him to stand up for himself or fight back?
- How did it feel to hear that Lewis's local library gave him a library card 40 years after he was denied one?

**8** Tell students they will observe some photos and add to the list they started of the ways Black people were segregated during Jim Crow. Divide students into small groups and give each a copy of the *Jim Crow Gallery* handouts. Direct groups to examine the images and complete the accompanying graphic organizer.

**9** Gather the class and discuss students' observations. Add to the list (started in step 7) of ways that segregation took place during the Jim Crow era. Project the handout *Where did Jim Crow Segregation Take Place?* Allow students to react to the list and remark on which places surprise them the most. Emphasize how widespread and dominant Jim Crow segregation was during the nearly 100 years that it lasted.


**10** Tell students that Jim Crow segregation ended after many decades of struggle and resistance by Black activists and their allies. Play the following StoryCorps audio interview, which provides a first-person account of someone who resisted Jim Crow: "Dion Diamond remembers the risks he took as a young civil rights activist" [2:22]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySx3xNdmg0A>. Afterwards, discuss the following questions:

- What is a sit-in? Why did Diamond start his "own private sit-ins"?
- Why did Diamond keep his activities from his parents? How did his family react when they found out?
- Diamond describes his actions as the "chances you take when you're young." Do you think it was just his youth that caused him to act as he did? What other reasons or personal qualities may have motivated him?
- How did Diamond react to the boy who pointed a finger in his face? Were you surprised by his reaction? Explain.

#### NOTE

When reviewing the "Think it Through" question on the handout, make sure students understand that "separate but equal" is never acceptable. Such policies signal that some groups are different and even inferior, and often result in exclusion and unequal treatment. The doctrine of "separate but equal" comes from the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which said that racially separate facilities, if equal, did not violate the Constitution. In 1954, the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* set a new precedent by ruling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" and that segregation is a form of discrimination.



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- 11** Highlight Diamond's words at the end of the clip: "Today, when people read my name, they may not know who I am... But anytime I pick up a historical publication, I feel as if a period or a comma in that book is my contribution." Assign students to create a piece of writing reacting to Diamond and reflecting on why he is more than a "period or comma" in our history books. Students may do this in the form of a letter to him or an original poem.
- 12** As time allows, have students share their writing in pairs or small groups. Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the questions on the following page.

# Discussion Questions

- 1 How do stereotypes (even ones that sound like compliments) harm people and society?
- 2 What is the connection between stereotypes and the way Jim Crow arose in our country?
- 3 What surprised you about the ways Black people have been segregated in our country? How did it make you feel to learn about this history?
- 4 Have you ever been afraid to speak up when you heard a stereotype or saw unfair treatment? Explain.
- 5 What did you learn from the civil rights leaders you met during this lesson that you can apply to your own life?
- 6 What can we do to make sure our classroom and community is a safe and stereotype-free place?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + BrainPOP. "Jim Crow." <https://www.brainpop.com/social-studies/ushistory/jimcrow>.
- + Ferris University. Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia. <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow>.
- + Osborne, Linda Barrett. *Miles to Go for Freedom: Segregation and Civil Rights in the Jim Crow Years*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2012.
- + State Bar of Georgia. "Brown v. Board of Education (1954): Separate Is NOT Equal." May 22, 2016. YouTube video, 8:03. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX9Dmo24\\_cc&t=2s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX9Dmo24_cc&t=2s).

# Lesson Extensions

- Have students read stories about children who fought for civil rights and discuss the personal qualities and actions that they can apply to their own lives. Recommended picture books include *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles and George Ford; *The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist* by Cynthia Levinson and Vanessa Brantley-Newton; *Let the Children March* by Monica Clark-Robinson; and *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh.
- Investigate the history of the Civil Rights Movement in your town or local community. Have students create a timeline of notable people and events. Invite a community member who participated in the movement to visit your school and speak about their experiences.
- Show the video *Brown v. Board of Education (1954): Separate Is NOT Equal* (see Additional Resources) and introduce students to the court case that ended legal segregation in the United States.
- Assign students to research current civil rights issues and leaders. Have them choose one, consult at least three online sources of information and create a brief report or multimedia presentation to share with the class.



## Who Was Jim Crow?



*Thomas Rice playing Jim Crow in blackface, Bowery Theatre, New York City, 1833*

In 1828, a white comedian from New York named Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice first performed the song and dance *Jump Jim Crow*. He darkened his face with burnt cork and paraded around the stage in an exaggerated way that made fun of Black men. Some say he got the idea from watching an elderly enslaved man who had trouble walking. Others say it was a ragged Black stable boy. However it began, the mocking performance became a huge hit with white audiences across the country.

*Jump Jim Crow* contributed to the rise of a new form of musical theater called the minstrel show. These shows included comedy and variety acts, songs and dances performed by white people in blackface. From the 1830s to the 1920s, these shows were highly popular and spread ugly stereotypes about Black people across the U.S.

“Daddy” Rice’s character and the popularity of minstrel shows led many white people to start referring to all Black men as “Jim Crow” in an insulting and demeaning way. Stereotypes of Black people as stupid, lazy and less than human caused many white people to believe that Black and white people should live separately. From the 1870s to the 1960s, a great number of laws were passed that separated Black people in almost every part of society, including schools, transportation, hospitals, theaters, parks and more. This cruel system of segregation is known as Jim Crow.

IMAGE SOURCE: BlackPast.org, “Thomas Rice as Jim Crow,” <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/jim-crow>.



# Jim Crow Gallery

View the photos in the Jim Crow Gallery. Choose three to examine closely. Record your observations on the chart below. Then answer the question at the bottom of this page.

Photo number	Where is the segregation taking place?	What do you notice? What details in the scene stand out?	What might have been the effect of the segregation?

**Think it Through:** During Jim Crow, some argued that segregation was acceptable as long as it was equal. For example, it was okay if the law required Black and white children to attend separate schools as long as one school was as good as the other. What do you think? Is “separate but equal” ever acceptable? Why or why not?

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# Jim Crow Gallery



# Jim Crow Gallery



4



5



6



7



# Jim Crow Gallery





# Jim Crow Gallery Photo Credits

- 1 Bubley, Esther. *1943 Colored Waiting Room Sign*. September 1943. United States Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed February 4, 2021. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1943\\_Colored\\_Waiting\\_Room\\_Sign.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1943_Colored_Waiting_Room_Sign.jpg).
- 2 Delano, Jack. *At the bus station in Durham, North Carolina*. May 1940. United States Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JimCrowInDurhamNC.jpg>.
- 3 *Discrimination in a restaurant in Juneau*. January 1, 1908. Accessed February 4, 2021. <http://historicalaska.blogspot.com/2011/06/racism-and-jim-crow-in-alaska.html>.
- 4 *New Orleans—Whites Only—Maids in Uniform Accepted*. 1969 “Jambalaya” Tulane University yearbook. Accessed February 4, 2021. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New\\_Orleans\\_-\\_Whites\\_Only\\_-\\_Maids\\_in\\_Uniform\\_Accepted.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:New_Orleans_-_Whites_Only_-_Maids_in_Uniform_Accepted.jpg).
- 5 Tampone, Victor. *African Americans WWII*. April 13, 1942. NARA—Pictures of World War II. Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:African-americans-wwii-002.jpg>.
- 6 Alexisrael. *A Jim Crow Law sign for bus segregation in North Carolina*. Accessed February 4, 2021. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North\\_Carolina\\_Jim\\_Crow\\_Laws.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:North_Carolina_Jim_Crow_Laws.JPG).
- 7 Colored Sailor’s Room. 1917–1919. War Department photograph via NARA website. Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ColoredSailersRoomWWINOLA.jpg>.
- 8 Lange, Dorothea. *Rex Theatre for Colored People, Leland, Mississippi*. June 1937. United States Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed February 4, 2021. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rex\\_theatre.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rex_theatre.jpg).
- 9 Wolcott, Marion Post. *Segregated cinema entrance*. October 1939. United States Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed February 4, 2021. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregated\\_cinema\\_entrance3.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Segregated_cinema_entrance3.jpg).
- 10 *View of street showing segregated taxi cab sign*. 1935–1965. New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed February 4, 2021. <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/9e8d39a4-cf9b-7f26-e040-e00a18066977>.
- 11 Lee, Russell. *“Colored” drinking fountain from mid-20th century with african-american drinking*. July 1939. United States Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1997026728/PP>.





# Where did Jim Crow Segregation Take Place?

- Barber shops/ salons
- Housing
- Trains
- Facilities for people with disabilities
- Telephone booths
- Childcare
- Boating
- Parks
- Schools
- Libraries
- Waiting rooms (e.g., train stations)
- Bars
- Textbooks
- Circus tents
- Fishing
- Buses
- Prisons
- Sports
- Marriage
- Water fountains
- Bathrooms
- Theaters
- Concerts
- Hospitals
- Cemeteries/funeral homes
- Restaurants/ lunch counters
- Swimming pools/areas
- Military
- Billiard halls
- **and many more places**

# THE STRUGGLE AGAINST JIM CROW SEGREGATION



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How were the lives of Black Americans impacted by Jim Crow and how did they resist it?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define Jim Crow and describe what life was like for Black Americans living under this system of segregation.
- Identify ways in which Black people resisted segregation and asserted their humanity during the Jim Crow era.
- Investigate sources on key events that reflect efforts by Black communities to end segregation.
- Create a timeline of important people and events related to the struggle against Jim Crow.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

105–135 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video
- “*Jim Crow Train*” handout (one to project)
- *Growing up under Jim Crow* handout (one per student)
- *Resistance to Jim Crow: Key Events* handout (one for teacher reference or one per student)
- Laptops or tablets for student research
- Construction paper



## VOCABULARY

blackface	Jim Crow	oppressive	stereotypes
<i>The Green Book</i>	minstrel shows	segregation	

# Procedures

## NOTE

While Jim Crow was most prevalent and deeply rooted in the South, segregation was a national problem. Segregation actually existed earlier in the North than in the South, for example on the Massachusetts Eastern Railroad in the 1830s. In the 20th century, federal and local policies led to segregation in public housing and schools throughout the country, and “whites only” policies were enforced in many northern shops, theaters, hotels and restaurants. “Sundown towns” were common in both the North and South, excluding Black people through discriminatory laws, intimidation and signposts literally requiring “colored people” to leave by sundown. In addition to these practices, anti-Black riots and killings happened with regularity in many northern cities. Students should understand that while Jim Crow was most repressive and violent in the South, it wasn’t exclusively a regional problem.

## PART 1

### Living Under Jim Crow (45 mins.)

1

Project the handout “*Jim Crow Train*” and introduce students to musician Joshua White. Play the song “Jim Crow Train” [3:01]: <https://bit.ly/37jqXbr>. While students are listening, have them write a response to one or more of the prompts below. Play the song a second time while students reflect and write.

- What was Jim Crow? Why might White have written a blues song about it?
- Why does White compare Jim Crow to a train? Why is he unable to ride the train?
- What hope or demand is White communicating through this song?
- What is the tone or feeling of the song?

2

Have students share their reflections with a partner or allow a few volunteers to share with the whole class. Make sure students understand the meaning of the term Jim Crow. Provide the following background as needed.

*In 1828, the white comedian Thomas “Daddy” Rice first staged the song and dance “Jump Jim Crow,” which was performed in blackface and mocked Black men. This act and the many minstrel shows that followed were highly popular among white audiences and spread ugly prejudices about Black people across the U.S. Soon many white people began referring to all Black men as “Jim Crow” in a demeaning way. Stereotypes of Black people as stupid, lazy and less than human caused many white people to believe that Black and white people should live separately. From the 1870s to the 1960s, numerous laws were passed that separated Black people in almost every part of society, including schools, transportation, hospitals, theaters, parks and more. This cruel system of segregation is known as Jim Crow.*

## 3

Ask students what their lives might have been like if they had grown up under Jim Crow. Have them think about the things that are important to them—school, athletics, hobbies, etc.—and imagine how those pursuits would have been impacted. Distribute the handout *Growing up under Jim Crow* and review the directions. Show one or more of the clips below from the PBS series by the same name. As they watch, have students take notes on the handout. Pause the video as needed to allow students time to record their observations.

- *Growing up under Jim Crow in Piedmont, WV and Chattanooga, TN*, featuring Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Samuel Jackson [4:31]: <http://bit.ly/3tTy1VW> (NOTE: This clip contains use of the N-word.)
- *Growing up under Jim Crow in Birmingham, AL*, featuring Condoleezza Rice [3:34]: <https://bit.ly/3jVL1pD>
- *Growing up under Jim Crow in Grapeland, TX*, featuring Ruth Simmons [5:02]: <http://bit.ly/379FZR0>

## 4

Discuss students’ reactions to the film clips and allow them to share some of the quotes they recorded. Post some of the quotes students captured and/or those below in different parts of the room. Have students form small groups around one quote that most resonates for them. Direct groups to interpret the quote and discuss how it makes them feel.

- “I had a very good idea of what our place was.”  
—Samuel Jackson
- “I was aware that there were certain ways of behaving that were essential to surviving in that environment.”  
—Ruth Simmons

- “In some ways, because it was so segregated, racism was everything and nothing at all.”  
—Condoleezza Rice
- “Segregation could impose many limits, but it couldn’t completely crush all of our dreams.”  
—Henry Louis Gates Jr.

## PART 2

### Resisting Jim Crow (60-90 mins.)

5

Comment that Jim Crow was violently oppressive and Black people continuously resisted this system in courageous and creative ways. To illustrate this idea, show the following two short videos one after the other.

- A woman who grew up in the Jim Crow South remembers one night on a rural road [3:05]:  
<https://bit.ly/3ak0zjF>
- The real story of *The Green Book* [4:16]:  
<https://bit.ly/2OBV47r>

6

After showing the videos, discuss some of the following questions:

- How was the road trip—a symbol of American freedom—affected by Jim Crow? What were the consequences for Black people who did not abide by the rules of the system?
- What were Black people forced to do to navigate and cope with segregation on the road?
- What did Francine mean when she said that her father “did what no man was supposed to do at that time”?
- When they were forced to stop for gas, how did Francine’s father alter his behavior and appearance? How did this make five-year-old Francine feel and what did it teach her? How did it make you feel?
- In Francine’s experience, how have white and Black people reacted differently to her story? Does this match your reaction? What does this tell you about the ways in which different people see racism?
- What reaction did you have to Victor Green’s solution to racism on the road? What networks of support did he use to make *The Green Book* a success?

- How do you interpret the phrase by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “As long as our bodies are heavy with the fatigue of travel...”? What might he have meant both literally and figuratively?

**7** Tell students that they will create a timeline of key events—like the publication of *The Green Book*—showing the ways in which Black Americans resisted oppression and asserted their humanity during the era of Jim Crow. Assign individuals or pairs a topic from the handout *Resistance to Jim Crow: Key Events*, or allow them to choose one they find interesting. Provide students with access to laptops or tablets for research.

**8** Direct students to consult two or three sources and create a timeline record containing the following:

- The title and date(s) of the event
- A brief narrative summary of three to five sentences that names key people and explains why the event was significant
- An illustration or image that reflects an important aspect of the event

Have students create their record on a half-sheet of standard construction paper (6" x 9") or using a web-based application such as [Sutori](#) or [Timeline JS](#).

**9** If students have created paper records, direct them to display their timelines in chronological order on the walls of the classroom. Once the timelines are ready to examine, have students conduct a gallery walk/view and read about the events their classmates researched. Answer any questions students have and discuss which events most surprised or inspired them. Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the questions on the following page.

#### NOTE

Direct students toward reliable sites as they research Black history. Suggestions include [Blackpast](#), [History.com](#), [Google Cultural Institute: Black History and Culture](#), [The Biography Channel: Black History](#), [The Culture Kidz: African American History](#) and [Ducksters: Black History Month](#).

# Discussion Questions

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + BrainPOP. "Jim Crow." <https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/jim-crow/>.
- + Thirteen/Educational Broadcasting Corporation. "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow." <https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/jimcrow/index.html>.
- + Ferris University. Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia. <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow>.
- + WNYC. "Kids Talk About Segregation." May 19, 2016. YouTube video, 3:44. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sff2N8rez\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sff2N8rez_8).

1

What is the origin of Jim Crow? Why is this term used to describe the era of legal segregation in the U.S.?

2

What features of life under Jim Crow most surprised or troubled you? Why?

3

How did these forms of segregation harm and limit opportunities for Black people?

4

How did many Black people show and maintain their humanity in the face of Jim Crow? What examples of resistance to Jim Crow stood out to you? Why?

5

Is segregation a problem in our community or nation today? If so, what forms does it take?

6

What can we do to resist segregation where it exists in our school or community?

# Lesson Extensions

- Assign students to analyze the "Examples of Jim Crow Laws" by state at <http://bit.ly/2Nsidst> to determine the areas of day-to-day life that were most impacted by Jim Crow (e.g., education, transportation, etc.). Have them develop a report or presentation on the ways in which these laws harmed Black communities.
- Show students the video *Kids Talk About Segregation* (see Additional Resources), in which fifth graders from the Bronx comment on what segregation looks like today from their vantage points. Have students create their own video in which they interview community members and share their own views on segregation. Use the video to stimulate a dialogue about segregation in your community and what students can do to address it.



## “Jim Crow Train” by Joshua White

Can't you hear that train whistle blow?  
Can't you hear that train whistle blow?  
Can't you hear that train whistle blow?  
Lord, I wish that train wasn't Jim Crow

Stop the train so I can ride this train  
Stop Jim Crow so I can ride this train  
Stop Jim Crow so I can ride this train  
Black and White folks ridin' side by side

Now hear that train whistle blow  
Can't you hear that train whistle blow?  
Can't you hear that train whistle blow?  
Oh Lord, this train is Jim Crow



**Joshua White (1914–1969)** was an American musician, actor and civil rights activist who grew up in segregated South Carolina. He wrote and performed blues, gospel, jazz and folk music, and was also known for his social protest songs. “Jim Crow Train” is from the 1941 album “Southern Exposure,” which included six anti-segregationist songs and was subtitled “An Album of Jim Crow Blues.” White had a close personal relationship with Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, and influenced the president’s views on desegregation. His anti-segregationist and pro-civil rights views were later used to label him as a Communist and disrupt his career during the period of McCarthyism.

IMAGE SOURCE: William P. Gottlieb, *Portrait of Josh White, Café Society Downtown, New York, N.Y., ca. June, United States, 1946.*, Monographic. Photograph, <https://www.loc.gov/item/gottlieb.09091>





# Growing up under Jim Crow

As you watch the video clip, take notes in each square below. On the back of this handout, record one quote from the video that really stood out to you.

VIDEO TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

*What specific forms did Jim Crow segregation take?*

*How was Jim Crow enforced?*

*How were Black people affected by Jim Crow?*

*How did Black people cope with or resist Jim Crow?*



# Resistance to Jim Crow: Key Events

This is a partial list of important events related to the struggle against Jim Crow.

1875	The Civil Rights Act of 1875 is passed
1881	Spelman College, the first college for Black women in the U.S., is founded
1892	Ida B. Wells launches her anti-lynching crusade
1898	Booker T. Washington speaks on race relations at the Cotton States and International Exposition
1903	<i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> by W.E.B. Du Bois is published
1903	<i>The Chicago Defender</i> , Chicago's first African American newspaper, is launched
1905	The Niagara Movement is formed
1909	The NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) is formed
1910	<i>The Crisis</i> , the first Black civil rights magazine, is established
1911	The National Urban League is founded
1914	Marcus Garvey establishes the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)
1920	The Harlem Renaissance begins
1925	A. Philip Randolph organizes the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
1936	Jesse Owens wins four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics
1936	Victor Hugo Green publishes <i>The Green Book</i>
1939	Marian Anderson performs at the Lincoln Memorial
1942	The Congress of Racial Equality is organized
1943	The Tuskegee Airmen are the first Black flying squadron to deploy overseas
1947	Jackie Robinson breaks the color line in baseball
1948	Executive Order 9981 desegregates the U.S. Armed Forces
1952	Malcolm X becomes a minister of the Nation of Islam
1954	The court case <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> makes segregation in schools illegal
1955	The Montgomery Bus Boycott begins
1957	The Little Rock Nine desegregate Central High School in Arkansas
1957	The Civil Rights Act of 1957 is passed
1960	The Greensboro sit-ins take place in North Carolina
1960	The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is founded
1961	Freedom Riders challenge segregation in the South
1963	The March on Washington, D.C. takes place
1964	The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is passed
1965	The march from Selma to Montgomery for voting rights and Bloody Sunday take place
1965	The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is passed

# JIM CROW AND THE ROOTS OF MASS INCARCERATION



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How is mass incarceration of Black Americans a continuation of enslavement and Jim Crow?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- List and define examples of Jim Crow.
- Describe the connections between Jim Crow and the mass incarceration of Black Americans today.
- Investigate the history of convict leasing through an analysis of primary source documents.
- Examine one way in which individuals are working to reform the criminal justice system today.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

100–130 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video and handouts
- *Excerpts from Punching the Air* handout, one per student
- *The Story of Green Cottenham* handout, one per student
- *Excerpt of a Letter from a Convict Laborer to the Alabama Board of Inspectors of Convicts, 1884* handout, one per student
- *Letter from a Federal Judge in Alabama to the U.S. Attorney General, 1903* handout, one per student



## VOCABULARY

13 <sup>th</sup> Amendment	inequity	mass incarceration	segregation
chain gang	involuntary servitude	minstrel show	stereotype
convict leasing	Jim Crow	“new Jim Crow”	vagrancy

# Procedures

## PART I

### The “New Jim Crow” (40 mins.)

- 1 Distribute the handout *Excerpts from Punching the Air* and read the introduction together with students, providing additional context as needed. Individually or in pairs, have students read the poems and choose one of the “Think About It” questions to respond to through writing or discussion.
- 2 Gather the class and ask for a few volunteers to share their reflections. Post the statistic below and allow students to react to it. If it feels safe and appropriate, ask students how mass incarceration of Black people impacts their communities or other communities they might know about.
 

*Black people are 7 times more likely than white people to be wrongly convicted of murder, 3.5 times more likely of sexual assault and 12 times more likely of drug crimes.*
- 3 Comment that the control of Black people through the criminal justice system today is referred to as the “new Jim Crow.” Ask students what the term *Jim Crow* means. Share the definitions below as needed.
  - **Jim Crow** was a fictional minstrel character created in the 1830s, depicting a clumsy and dim-witted enslaved man. The term Jim Crow became a common insult for Black people.
  - **Jim Crow** is also the name given to the system of segregation in the U.S. from 1876–1965. During that time, a series of laws were passed and brutally enforced that separated Black people from white people and limited their opportunity to vote, hold jobs, get an education and enjoy other freedoms.

#### NOTE

As an alternative to the “Think About It” questions, some students may want to write or speak about their personal experiences with the criminal justice system. This should be encouraged only if students choose to explore this option, and their responses should be kept confidential unless they wish to discuss them more openly. Be aware that this reflection may be emotionally difficult for some students. Allow those individuals to opt out if they wish, and seek support from a guidance counselor as needed.

#### NOTE

The following websites provide concrete examples of Jim Crow laws: Jim Crow Museum, “Examples of Jim Crow Laws,” <https://bit.ly/31Dgt3w>; National Park Service, “Jim Crow Laws,” <https://bit.ly/3cHBArJ>.

## NOTE

From the Center for Law and Justice (<http://www.cflj.org/programs/new-jim-crow>): “More African Americans are under the control of the criminal justice system today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850. Discrimination in housing, education, employment, and voting rights, which many Americans thought was wiped out by the civil rights laws of the 1960s, is now perfectly legal against anyone labeled a ‘felon.’ And since many more people of color than whites are made felons by the entire system of mass incarceration, racial discrimination remains as powerful as it was under slavery or under the post-slavery era of Jim Crow segregation.”

4

Follow up by asking: Can you think of ways in which mass incarceration today is connected to the Jim Crow of yesterday? Chart students’ examples. Share information from the note to the left and emphasize that while there has been progress toward racial equality, discrimination against Black people has never gone away—it has just evolved in different forms.

## PART 2

### Convict Leasing: The Reenslavement of Black Americans (60–90 mins.)

5

Tell students that there are many ways in which mass incarceration today is rooted in the eras of enslavement and Jim Crow, and they will explore one of those ways during this lesson. Explain that the example they will look at is related to a loophole in the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which ended slavery in the U.S. Post the text of the amendment and challenge students—in pairs or small groups—to identify the loophole and its implications for Black Americans.

13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (ratified in 1865): *Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.*

6

Discuss students’ thoughts. Note that the phrase “except as a punishment for crime...” allowed the government to take advantage of people convicted of crimes by returning them to enslavement or involuntary servitude. Explain that in the period following the Civil War, Black codes and Jim Crow laws created many new types of offenses that sent Black people to prison at higher rates than ever before. Once convicted, these “criminals” could be reenslaved.

7

Share that the *convict leasing* system was one way in which this reenslavement occurred. Write the term on the board and allow students to share any prior knowledge they have about it. Then show the Black History in Two Minutes (or So) video, “Convict Leasing” [2:06]: <https://bit.ly/3fASGcx>. (Consider playing it a second time, as there is a lot of information packed into the two minutes.) Discuss some of the following questions with students:

- How did the convict leasing system work? Why did it disproportionately affect Black people?
- What was the economic incentive behind the system?

- Why does Kimberlé Crenshaw say that the “aftermath of slavery was in some ways worse than slavery itself”?
- How do you interpret the statement, “The pipeline from prison to profits in this country has deep roots”?
- How is today’s mass incarceration connected to the convict leasing system of the post-slavery/Jim Crow era?

8

Divide the class into small groups and distribute copies of the handouts below, which provide personal stories and primary source material exploring how the convict leasing system operated and affected real individuals.

- *The Story of Green Cottenham*
- *Excerpt of a Letter from a Convict Laborer to the Alabama Board of Inspectors of Convicts, 1884*
- *Letter from a Federal Judge in Alabama to the U.S. Attorney General, 1903*

9

In their groups, have students read and annotate the handouts using the method below. Following their analysis, gather the class to review and discuss their reactions, insights and questions.

- *Underline* information that shows the incentives behind the convict leasing system during the Jim Crow era.
- *Circle* information that shows connections between convict leasing and the “new Jim Crow” or mass incarceration of Black people today.
- *Record margin notes* with your reactions and questions in response to the readings.

10

Bring the conversation back to the idea of the “new Jim Crow” by playing the *New York Times* opinion piece by Meek Mill titled “Do You Understand These Rights as I’ve Read Them to You?” [2:26]: <https://nyti.ms/3t48GYJ>. Afterwards, have students free write in response to the quote below from the video. Allow them to share their writing and thoughts in pairs or small groups.

*Meek Mill: “The plantation and the prison are actually no different. The past is the present. It ain’t no coincidence.”*

11

Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the questions on the following page.

## NOTE

Meek Mill is an American rapper and songwriter from Philadelphia. He was convicted on gun and drug charges in 2008 (which Mill has claimed were trumped up). After his release, Mill battled with the court system for almost a decade over probation violations that resulted in harsh penalties, including additional jail time. The severity of the punishments in response to what was perceived as minor violations made Mill a national cause célèbre and an activist for criminal justice reform. The purpose of this exercise is not to debate Mill’s guilt or innocence, but to consider the arguments he presents in his opinion piece on the criminal justice system.



# Discussion Questions

1

How did Black Americans reexperience enslavement during the Jim Crow era?

2

How does mass incarceration of Black Americans today function as “the new Jim Crow”?

3

What have been the economic incentives behind the mass incarceration of Black people?

4

How does the criminal justice system target those who are innocent as well as guilty of crimes?

5

How does the criminal justice system today deny rights to people even after they have served their sentences?

6

How has racial bias in the criminal justice system affected your community or you personally?

7

How are some people working to address the “new Jim Crow”? What reforms do you think are most important?

# Lesson Extensions

- Have students conduct a close reading of the excerpt from *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander at <https://bit.ly/3cVXxmZ>. In small groups, have them participate in a “group annotation” in which they work together to attach comments to the reading indicating commonalities between the Jim Crow of yesterday and mass incarceration today.
- In 2018, an unmarked gravesite was discovered in Sugar Land, Texas, containing the remains of 95 African Americans who were part of Texas’s convict leasing system. Have students learn about the Sugar Land 95 by visiting the Convict Leasing and Labor Project website (<https://www.clptx.org>) and watching the video “Unearthing the Truth of the Sugar Land 95” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29qeqtgwPzQ>). Since the Sugar Land 95 were not memorialized upon their death, assign students to create a marker honoring them with information about the convict leasing system and the unjust treatment of Black Americans during Jim Crow.
- Form student-led discussion groups around one of the following young adult books: *Just Mercy* or *Punching the Air* (see Additional Resources). Have students journal as they read, identifying key themes and questions for discussion. In small groups, have them work collaboratively to pose their questions and share insights.
- Share the story of Winfred Rembert (1945–2021), who turned his painful experiences with wrongful imprisonment and forced labor into beautiful works of art (see <https://winfredrembert.com>). Have students view examples of his artwork and write reflectively in response to one or more of the following questions:
  - ➔ What do you think Rembert is communicating through these works? What feelings do they convey?
  - ➔ Rembert survived a near-lynching and time on a chain gang. Are you surprised to learn these practices existed in this country until relatively recently? Explain.
  - ➔ Why do you think it was important to Rembert to preserve and share the stories of his past? How has his story affected you?
  - ➔ How are art and memory forms of activism? Describe other examples of this kind of social action.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Adrian, Christine. “The Convict-Lease System, 1866–1928.” *Middle Level Learning Number* 44 (May/June 2012): 2–16.
- + Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.
- + Coven, Rebecca. “Teaching About Mass Incarceration: The Ongoing Narrative of Racial Oppression.” *Learning for Justice*, December 11, 2018. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/teaching-about-mass-incarceration-the-ongoing-narrative-of-racial-oppression>.
- + Salaam, Yusef and Zoboi, Ibi. *Punching the Air*. New York: HarperCollins, 2020.
- + Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy (Movie Tie-In Edition, Adapted for Young Adults)*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018.
- + “Teaching the New Jim Crow.” *Learning for Justice*. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/teaching-the-new-jim-crow>.
- + “Timeline of the Rise of the Modern American Prison System.” T’ruah. <http://www.truah.org/wp-content/uploads/MIH/MIH-18-20-timeline-modern-american-prison.pdf>.





# Excerpts from *Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

*Punching the Air* is the fictional story of Amal, a 16-year-old Black boy who is convicted and sent to prison for a crime he didn't commit. Yusef Salaam, one of the authors, is a member of the Exonerated Five. In 1989, Salaam and four other Black and Latino boys were wrongly convicted of attacking a white woman in New York's Central Park, and served prison sentences ranging from 6 to 12 years. All five were cleared of the charges after a prison inmate confessed to the crime in 2002. Racial bias played a large role in the "Central Park jogger" case. Today, Salaam is a prison reform activist who works against racism and other forms of inequity in the criminal justice system.

## COURTROOM

I know the courtroom ain't  
the set of a music video, ain't  
Coachella or the BET Awards, ain't  
MTV, VH1, or the Grammys  
But still

There's an audience  
of fans, experts, and judges

Eyes watching through filtered screens  
seeing every lie, reading every made-up word  
like a black hoodie counts as a mask  
like some s\*\*\* I do with my fingers  
counts as gang signs  
like a few fights counts as uncontrollable rage  
like failing three classes  
counts as being dumb as f\*\*\*  
like everything that I am, that I've ever been  
counts as being  
guilty

## GRAY SUIT

Umi told me to wear a gray suit  
Because optics

But that gray didn't make me any less black  
My white lawyer didn't make me any less black

And words can paint black-and-white pictures, too

Maybe ideas have their own eyes  
separating black from white as if the world  
is some old, old TV show

Maybe ideas segregate like in the days of  
Dr. King, and no matter how many marches  
or Twitter hashtags or Justice for So-and-So

our mind's eyes and our eyes' minds  
see the world as they want to  
Everything already illustrated  
in black and white

SOURCE: Salaam, Yusef and Zoboi, Ibi. *Punching the Air*. New York: HarperCollins, 2020.

## THINK ABOUT IT...

- 1 What does the author mean by "eyes watching through filtered screens"? What "filters" affect the way we see certain people, specifically Black youth, in our society?
- 2 In what ways is Amal reduced to a stereotype in the courtroom and in his life in general?
- 3 What are "optics"? Why are the gray suit and other optics unable to change people's perceptions of Amal?
- 4 What are examples that illustrate the line, "ideas have their own eyes, separating black from white"?
- 5 The author suggests that racial bias persists as in the past, despite modern protest movements. Do you agree? Why or why not?



# The Story of Green Cottenham

Green Cottenham's story is described in detail in the book *Slavery by Another Name* by Douglas A. Blackmon.

Cottenham was born in Shelby County, Alabama, in 1886. He was the youngest of nine children born to formerly enslaved parents. On March 30, 1908, 22-year-old Cottenham headed to the Columbiana train depot, a popular meeting spot for Black men looking for work or to socialize. There, he was arrested for "vagrancy," a vague charge used to detain Black people for not working, working at jobs unrecognized by whites or just gathering in public places.

After a speedy trial in which no evidence of wrong-doing was presented, Cottenham was found guilty and sentenced to 30 days of hard labor. He was also charged about \$38 in court fees, a small fortune for a poor Black man in 1908. These fees were said to cover the costs of the sheriff, his deputy, the court clerk and witnesses, but they amounted to just another way to profit from poor convicts. Cottenham was, of course, unable to pay the fees, so his sentence was extended to nearly a year.

At the turn of the 20th century, industry in the U.S. was booming and there was a tremendous need for resources such as coal and iron. The U.S. Steel Corporation, headquartered in New York, was one of the largest companies in the world. In 1907, the year before Cottenham's arrest, U.S. Steel purchased its biggest competitor, the Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company. Tennessee Coal had relocated most of its business to Alabama in the late 1800s, and the city of Birmingham became the national center for iron and steel making.

Businesses like Tennessee Coal desired cheap labor to grow their industries and keep profits high. At the same time, southern states were desperate for funds to rebuild their economies in the decades following the Civil War. The passage of racist Jim Crow laws in those states led to the arrests of record numbers of Black people, who were



Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company furnaces, Ensley, Alabama

expensive to look after and increased states' financial burden. These trends led to the growth of *convict leasing*. The idea was ruthlessly simple: States provided prison labor to private businesses, like plantations and mining companies, for a set fee and a set period of time. The states profited from their prisoners and businesses obtained free labor in exchange for feeding and housing them. The cruel and dehumanizing treatment of mostly Black boys and men under this system led author Douglas A. Blackmon to call it "slavery by another name."

Cottenham was one of the hundreds of thousands of African Americans victimized by the convict leasing system. He was sold to Tennessee Coal for \$12 per month, and sent to the Pratt coal mines, where he labored in Slope No. 12. In the five years leading up to Cottenham's imprisonment, more than 1,000 mostly Black convicts were transported to these mines, including teenagers and children under the age of 10. The so-called crimes that brought them there included illegal voting, obscene language, selling cotton after sunset, disturbing females on a railroad car, riding a freight train without buying a ticket, having a relationship with a white woman and homosexuality.



# The Story of Green Cottenham



Members of a southern chain gang, between 1900 and 1906.

In the mines, the prisoners performed back-breaking labor for six long days each week, and rarely saw the sun rise or set. People like Cottenham were forced to remove as much as eight tons of coal each day from the mines. Failure to meet this requirement led to severe punishments, including dozens of lashes with a whip that ripped the skin from the backs of its victims. At night, the prisoners were locked in a wooden barracks, 200 worn-out bodies chained to one another in a single chamber. Those who tried to escape were fixed with iron shackles, cuffs, collars, balls and chains.

In the crowded, filthy and airless environment of the mines, disease spread rapidly. Those who didn't succumb to the beatings, fires and gas explosions fell victim to dysentery, pneumonia, tuberculosis, typhoid and yellow fever. Others collapsed from exhaustion and malnutrition. In the first month after Cottenham arrived at Pratt, six people died. By the year's end, 60 had perished. Records from the years 1888–1889 show that 18 percent of the laborers at the mine died. The bodies of these mostly Black boys and men were dumped into nearby shallow graves or incinerated in coal ovens.

Sadly, Cottenham was among those lost. Four months after his arrest, he died of tuberculosis in a work-camp hospital run by Tennessee Coal. In a cruel twist of fate, a child born to the first generation of free Black people in his family died in bondage 43 years after the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, banning slavery and involuntary servitude throughout the United States.

## SOURCES

Blackmon, Douglas A., *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 84–115.

Detroit Publishing Company. "A Southern Chain Gang." 1900–1906. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2016803065>.

Detroit Publishing Co. "Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Co. [Company] furnaces, Ensley, Ala." 1910–1920.

Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2016815606>.

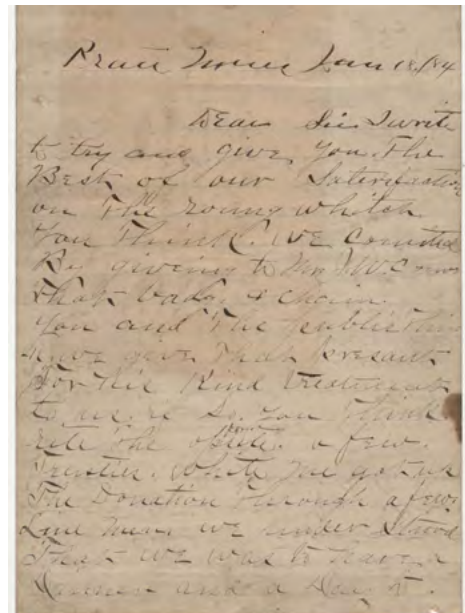
"The Untold History of Post-Civil War 'Neoslavery,'" NPR Talk of the Nation, March 25, 2008, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89051115>.



## Excerpt of a Letter from a Convict Laborer to the Alabama Board of Inspectors of Convicts, 1884

"[Our living quarters are] filled with filth and vermin. ... [Gunpowder cans were used to hold human waste that periodically] would fill up and run over on bed [where some prisoners were shackled in place at night].

... Every Day some one of us were carried to our last resting, the grave. Day after day we looked Death in the face & was afraid to speak. ... Fate seems to curse a convict. Death seems to summon us hence. ... Comer is a hard man. I have seen men come to him with their shirts a solid scab on their back and beg him to help them and he would say [']let the hide grow back and take it off again.['] I have seen him hit men 100 and 160 [times] with a ten prong strop [sic], then say they was not whiped [sic]. He would go off after an escape man come one day with him and dig his grave the same day. We go to cell wet, go to bed wet and arise wet the following morning and evry [sic] guard knocking[,] beating[,] yelling[,] Keep [sic] in line Jumping Ditches [sic]."



Guards watch over a group of convict-lease prisoners in Birmingham. Alabama's convict-lease system existed from 1875–1928.

### SOURCES

Archey, Ezekiel. *Letter from a convict laborer at Pratt Mines in Jefferson County, Alabama, to Reginald Dawson, president of the Alabama Board of Inspectors of Convicts*. Letter. From Alabama Department of Archives and History, January 18, 1884. <https://digital.archives.alabama.gov/digital/collection/voices/id/5414/rec/1>.

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## Letter from a Federal Judge in Alabama to the U.S. Attorney General, 1903

Sir: Some witnesses before the Grand Jury here have developed the fact that in Shelby County [Alabama] in this District, and in this Coosa County in the Middle district, a systematic scheme of depriving negroes of their liberty, and hiring them out, has been practiced for some time.

The plan is to accuse the negro of some petty offense, and then require him, in order to escape conviction, to enter into an agreement to pay his accuser so much money, and sign a contract, under the terms of which his bondsmen can hire him out until he pays a certain sum. The negro is made to believe he is a convict, and treated as such. It is said that thirty negroes were in the stockade at one time.

Thursday, a negro witness who had been summoned here, and testified before the Grand Jury, was taken from the train by force, and imprisoned on account of his testimony; but finally his captors became frightened and turned him loose. The grand jury found indictments against nine of the parties. I deemed it essential to the safety of the negro that a deputy marshal should protect him while in that county, and while here giving testimony; and that the accused parties should be promptly arrested and held to bail, in order to deter them, at least, from further violence to the negro....

—Yours Truly, T. G. Jones



Juvenile convicts at work in the fields, 1903

### SOURCES

Detroit Publishing Company. Juvenile convicts at work in the fields. 1903. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/det.4a28370>.

Clabough, Jeremiah and Bickford, John H. III, "Birmingham and the Human Costs of Industrialization: Using the C3 Framework to Explore the 'Magic City' in the Gilded Age," *Middle Level Learning* Number 63 (September 2018): 2-19.

Jones, Thomas Goode. *Letter from Thomas Goode Jones to Philander C. Knox*. March 21, 1903. In *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* by Douglas A. Blackmon, p. 423-424. New York: Anchor Books, 2008.

# How did the Great Migration simultaneously bring new freedoms and new limitations for Black Americans?

The racial violence and discrimination of the Jim Crow system, and the consequent barriers to economic opportunity, led many Black Americans in the South to plan for a better life in freer parts of the country. A variety of factors made this movement possible beginning in the early part of the 20th century. Industry was booming in northern cities, but a labor shortage grew due to restrictions on immigration and the conscription of young workers during World War I. Companies posted job listings in Black media and dispatched agents to the South to enlist Black workers. This enraged southern business and political leaders, who decried the theft of their labor pool and attempted to fine and detain northern agents. However, their protestations did not abate the start of the Great Migration, as evidenced in this 1916 *Washington Times* headline: “South Unable to Put Stop to Negro Exodus.”<sup>4</sup> Beginning that year, Black migrants fled the South in two long waves. In the first, from 1916–1940, about 1.6 million Black people relocated from the rural South, mostly to the industrial North. From 1940–1970, an additional 5 million Black Americans migrated, dispersing across the North, Midwest and West.

Black Americans were filled with hope for a safer, freer and more prosperous life in the North. In many ways, their aspirations were fulfilled as they

pursued education and employment opportunities with far fewer restrictions than in the South. However, they soon faced many barriers to progress in their new communities. As more Black people arrived in northern cities and soldiers returned home from World War I to an economic slump, competition over jobs and housing led to anti-Black resentment. During the “Red Summer” of 1919, racially motivated riots broke out in cities across the U.S., leading to the deaths of hundreds of Black people and the destruction of their homes and businesses.

Discriminatory attitudes and policies led to segregation in public housing and schools, and “whites only” policies were enforced in many northern shops, theaters, hotels and restaurants. The exclusion of Black people from white residential areas caused a rise in low-income housing that was often poorly maintained by white building owners and ignored by municipal services. As such, areas known as “Black Belts” emerged in every major city, and these areas later became known as urban “ghettos.” Over time, residential segregation was institutionalized through government policy. In the 1930s, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) refused to insure mortgages in and around Black communities—a practice known as “redlining”—while at the same time subsidizing the mass

4 “South Unable to Put Stop to Negro Exodus.” *The Washington Times*, October 26, 1916. *Chronicle America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. <https://bit.ly/3rZOFrm>.

production of white suburbs. Many of the homes in these white communities came with restrictive covenants that prohibited Black people from purchasing or renting them. These practices created a concentration of poor Black urban areas in cities across the country that have trapped many African Americans in a cycle of generational poverty, even today.

Though Black Americans faced continued discrimination during the period of the Great Migration, this era also saw an expansion of Black political involvement, business development and the growth of Black religious, social, civic and cultural institutions. In the 1920s, the New Negro Movement encouraged a more forthright Black national consciousness, assertiveness in response

to the status quo and transformation through Black art and culture, which spurred the Harlem Renaissance and a flourishing of Black music, art and literature nationwide. This spirit of self-sufficiency and change fed the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement and the many advances for Black people it would bring. As Isabel Wilkerson observes in her chronicle of the Great Migration, *The Warmth of Other Suns*:<sup>5</sup> “By their actions... they willed [the American Dream] into being by a definition of their own choosing. They did not ask to be accepted but declared themselves the Americans that perhaps few others recognized but that they had always been deep within their hearts.”

5 Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

# RESISTING OPPRESSION, CLAIMING FREEDOM



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What was the Great Migration and why did so many Black Americans migrate north during the early 1900s?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define the Great Migration and examine a map illustrating it.
- Discuss the factors that pushed people from the South and pulled them to other parts of the country.
- Analyze photos depicting some of the benefits and challenges for Black Americans in the North.
- Compose a piece of writing demonstrating their understanding of some of the experiences of people who were part of the Great Migration.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

100 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment for projecting a map and images
- *The Great Migration: Journey to the North* by Eloise Greenfield (book)
- *The Migration Series, Panel No. 1* handout (one copy to project)
- *The Great Migration* handout (one copy to project)
- *Moving North: Observations* handout (one copy per small group)
- *Moving North: Photos* handout (one copy per small group)
- *Moving North: Background* handout (one copy for teacher reference)



## VOCABULARY

discrimination

housing project

segregation

Great Migration

migration

slum



# Procedures

## NOTE

The *Migration Series* is a sequence of 60 panels created by the African American painter Jacob Lawrence. Published in 1941, they depict the experiences of Black people during the Great Migration to northern and western states that took place beginning in 1916. The artist conceived the series as a single work with a connected narrative. Lawrence grew up in the North, but his parents were from Virginia and South Carolina, and part of the Great Migration. For more information, visit <https://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org>.

## NOTE

If students ask about the Ku Klux Klan, explain that it is a hate group that believes white people are superior and that has used violence to intimidate Black people as well as other groups that are different from them.

## PART 1

### Leaving Home (40 mins.)

1

Project the handout *The Migration Series, Panel No. 1*. Have students engage in a think-pair-share in response to one or more of the questions below. Discuss their responses, the mood of the painting and how it makes them feel.

- What do you notice about the people in the painting? Who might they be?
- Where are the people? Where are they going? What might be the reason?
- What does the title of the painting mean? How might it explain what these people are doing?

2

Ask what *migration* means and define it as the act of moving from one place to another. Explain that over 100 years ago, many Black Americans began a migration from the southern parts of the U.S., where they lived, to the northern and western parts; from 1916–1970, more than 6 million Black people made this move.

3

Project the handout *The Great Migration* and explore the map together. Identify which states Black people migrated *from* and the cities and states they migrated to. Point out that the Jacob Lawrence painting depicts this mass migration to large northern cities. Ask students why so many Black people during this time may have wanted to leave their homes and start a new life in the North.

4

Read aloud *The Great Migration: Journey to the North* by Eloise Greenfield and discuss some of the questions below as you read.

- What was life like for many Black Americans in the South during the early 1900s?
- What was “the news” that spread across southern communities about life in the North? [*The story mentions better jobs, nicer houses and “no Ku Klux Klan.”*]

- What different feelings did people have about saying good-bye to their homes in the South? What things were they most happy and sad to leave behind?
- What different thoughts and feelings did people have as they imagined life in northern cities?
- What hopes and dreams did people have as they arrived in the North to start a new life?
- What groups of people have migrated in today's world to seek a better life? Do you know why they migrated?

## PART 2

### Life Up North (60 mins.)

- 5 Repeat the line at the end of Greenfield's book: "We were one family among the many thousands, Mama and Daddy leaving home, coming to the city with their hopes and their courage and their dreams and other children to make a better life." Ask students what specific hopes and dreams these families had and list their ideas on the board. Possible responses include a good education, better jobs, improved housing and freedom from segregation and discrimination.
- 6 Tell students they will be viewing photos of life in the North for Black people and thinking about whether their hopes and dreams were achieved. Divide the class into small groups and provide each with the handouts *Moving North: Observations* and *Moving North: Photos*. Review the instructions and answer any questions students may have.
- 7 Reconvene and discuss students' observations. Make sure they understand that while Black Americans enjoyed new freedoms in the North, they also faced continued segregation, prejudice and related problems, such as poverty.
- 8 Individually or in pairs, have students choose one photo to focus on in more depth. Tell them to pretend they are the photographer and to write about the image. They may do this in the form of a diary entry or a brief article to be published in a local newspaper. Direct students to draw upon what they have learned about Jim Crow and the Great Migration, and to imagine what the photographer might have seen, thought and felt in that moment.
- 9 As time allows, have students share their writing with one another. Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the questions on the following page.

#### NOTE

*The Great Migration: Journey to the North* is a collection of poems and artwork that explores the experiences and feelings of Black families who left the South to find better lives in northern cities. Greenfield's own family migrated from North Carolina to Washington, D.C., when she was just four months old. If you do not have access to this book, a read-aloud is available online at <https://bit.ly/3diAC5z> [8:47].

#### NOTE

Refer to the handout *Moving North: Background* for photo context that may help students with their analysis.



# Discussion Questions

1

What were the conditions that *pushed* so many Black Americans to leave the South?

2

What were the conditions that *pulled* them to northern cities and states?

3

What did it feel like for the migrants to start a new life in a strange place? What were some of their hopes and fears?

4

What rights did Black people have in the North that they were denied in the South?

5

What challenges to equality did Black Americans experience in the North? Do you think they were surprised by this? Why?

6

How do you think the Great Migration changed the people who were a part of it?

7

Do you know about groups today who have migrated from their home countries in large numbers? What caused them to migrate? How do you think we should treat migrant groups in our school or community?

# Lesson Extensions

- Have students read the picture book *The Great Migration: An American Story* (see Additional Resources), which features paintings from Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*; or explore panels from the series online. Assign students to create original artwork that depicts some of the people or experiences they learned about during their study of the Great Migration.
- View the Newark Public Library's exhibits on the Great Migration (<https://bit.ly/2NEJPL1>): "From the South to Newark" and "Zaundria Mapson." Explore the experiences of Black people who migrated to New Jersey. If possible, have students interview a family or community member who was part of the Great Migration, or invite in a guest speaker who can share their personal experiences during this era.
- Discuss with students the ways in which Black arts and culture thrived in many northern cities during the era of the Great Migration. Have them research an artist and create a poster or multimedia presentation about that person's artistic life and contributions. Examples include:

NAME	TYPE OF ART	BORN IN	MIGRATED TO
Eubie Blake	musician	Maryland	New York
John Coltrane	musician	North Carolina	Philadelphia
Aaron Douglas	visual artist/painter	Kansas	New York
Walter Ellison	visual artist/painter	Georgia	Chicago
John Lee Hooker	musician	Mississippi	Detroit
Zora Neale Hurston	writer	Alabama	New York
Bessie Smith	musician	Tennessee	Philadelphia
Richard Wright	writer	Mississippi	Chicago

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Digital Public Library of America. "Primary Source Sets: The Great Migration." <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-great-migration>.
- + Imani, Blair. *Making Our Way Home: The Great Migration and the Black American Dream*. New York: Ten Speed Press, 2020.
- + Lawrence, Jacob and Myers, Walter Dean. *The Great Migration: An American Story*. Logan, IA: Perfection Learning, 1995.
- + Newark Public Library. "My Newark Story." <https://npl.org/mynewarkstory>.
- + PBS Learning Media. "The Great Migration—New Jersey: Then and Now." <https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/great-migration-new-jersey-video/new-jersey-then-and-now>.
- + The Phillips Collection. "Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series." <https://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org>.
- + Woodson, Jacqueline. *This Is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration*. London: Puffin Books, 2017.



## The Migration Series, Panel No. 1



SOURCE: Lawrence, Jacob, *The Migration Series, Panel no. 1: During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, 1940–1941*. The Jacob and Gwendolyn Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



# The Great Migration



SOURCE: Siegel, Michael, *The Great Migration, 1900-1929*, 2005, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/85f0908d-8265-f747-e040-e00a18062131>.



# Moving North: Observations

In *The Great Migration: Journey to the North* by Eloise Greenfield, the author writes: "We were one family among the many thousands, Mama and Daddy leaving home, coming to the city with their hopes and their courage and their dreams and other children to make a better life."

Examine the photos of life in the North. Cut them apart and place each into one of the categories below. Note what you observe about each photo and why you chose one category or the other. Then answer the question at the bottom of this page.

## HOPES AND DREAMS FULFILLED

## HOPES AND DREAMS DENIED

**Drawing Conclusions:** Do you think life improved for the Black Americans who migrated to the North? Explain why.

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# Moving North: Photos







## Moving North: Photos





## Moving North: Photos





# Moving North: Background

- 1 This photo of a Black teacher at an integrated school was taken in 1922 in New York City by Carter G. Woodson, a historian and writer who was known as the “Father of Black History.”

SOURCE: Godwin Woodson, Carter, *A result of the migration; A Negro teacher with pupils of both races*, 1922, Digital Public Library, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-great-migration/sources/536>.

- 2 Two boys are transporting wood scraps to earn money on the Lower East Side of New York City in the early 1900s. The photo was taken by Lewis Hine, a photographer and sociologist famous for using his camera to draw attention to social problems such as poverty and child labor.

SOURCE: Hine, Lewis, *Two Boys Transporting Wood Scraps*, 1900–1937, New York Public Library Digital Collections, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-a978-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

- 3 This 1922 photo shows Black women in Chicago, Illinois, working in a large apron factory. Such jobs would not have been available to them in the South during this era.

SOURCE: *Negro women employed on power machines in a large apron factory*, 1922, New York Public Library Digital Collections, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-1f1a-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

- 4 Due to discrimination, many Black people were forced to live in segregated housing in slum areas. This photo is set in Newark, New Jersey, during the 1940s or 1950s.

SOURCE: *Sidewalk view of “slum” housing in Newark*, WPA Photographs, New Jersey State Archives, accessed February 10, 2021, <http://riseupnewark.com/chapters/chapter-2/african-american-migration-pt-2>.

- 5 In this 1941 photo, children are lined up in front of a movie theater on Easter Sunday in Chicago, Illinois.

SOURCE: *Children in front of moving picture theater, Easter Sunday matinee, Black Belt, Chicago, Illinois*, 1941, Library of Congress, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://loc.getarchive.net/media/children-in-front-of-moving-picture-theater-easter-sunday-matinee-black-belt-5>.

- 6 This sign was posted opposite the Sojourner Truth homes in Detroit, Michigan, in 1942. The homes were part of a federally funded housing project. A riot was caused by white neighbors trying to prevent Black tenants from moving in.

SOURCE: Siegel, Arthur S., *We want white tenants*, February 1942, United States Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., accessed February 10, 2021, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:We\\_want\\_white\\_tenants.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:We_want_white_tenants.jpg).

# OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN THE NORTH



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why did so many Black Americans migrate to the North during the early and mid-1900s? How did housing policy play a large role in reinforcing racism and segregation?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Define the Great Migration and identify the push and pull factors that caused it.
- Analyze primary and secondary sources that present Black perspectives on the Great Migration.
- Investigate examples of housing segregation and inequality experienced by Black migrants in the North.
- Interpret a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. illustrating activism for fair housing laws and practices.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

105–135 minutes



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video and project images
- *Black Americans Living in the U.S. South* handout (one to project or one per pair of students)
- *The Great Migration* handout (one to project)
- *Letters from the Great Migration* handout (one per student)
- *Urban Black Communities and Suburban Communities* handouts (one to project or one per student)
- *Excerpts from Chicago Freedom Festival Speech* handout (one per student)



## VOCABULARY

activist	The Great Migration	redlining	suburban
discrimination	migration	segregation	urban
ghettos		slums	





4

Gather the class and examine the photo (on page 2 of the handout) of the migrants headed to New Jersey. Discuss the feeling conveyed and the possible hopes of the family members. Comment that during the first decades of the Great Migration, the percentage of Black people in New Jersey grew more than any other northern state.

5

Show the two PBS videos, *The Great Migration—New Jersey: Then and Now* [1:27] and *Social Effects of the Great Migration* [2:39]: <http://bit.ly/3dqi2sw>. As students watch, have them continue to add notes to their T-charts. Pause the videos as needed to allow students time to record their ideas. Afterwards, discuss some of the following questions:

- What do you think were the two or three strongest push and pull factors behind the Great Migration?
- What does the narrator mean by the “hopelessness of race relations” in the South? What was happening in that region that caused Black people to feel like there was no hope?
- Why were there more job opportunities in the North beginning in the 1910s? What was going on in the country that contributed to this situation?
- What were Black people’s experiences in New Jersey? Do you think their hopes for a better future were realized? Explain.
- The narrator comments that “racism worked against improvement.” What does he mean? What are specific examples of the ways in which racism limited opportunities for Black people in the North?
- How did Black people respond to the lack of equality they encountered in the North?

## PART 2

### The Rise of the Urban Ghetto (60–90 mins.)

6

Comment that while the Great Migration did increase opportunity, Black people continued to face prejudice and discrimination in northern cities. Highlight that housing segregation was a persistent problem in the North, where Black people were often limited to living in ghettos. Ask students how they would define *ghetto* and the associations they have with this term. Chart and organize students’ responses into a concept map, for example:

#### NOTE

Make certain students understand the dominant push factors (i.e., lack of economic opportunity, poor working conditions, segregation and racial violence) and pull factors (i.e., work and economic opportunities, desegregated schools/better education and greater social equality). Make clear that World War I and new limits on immigration created a need for cheap labor in the North, which created opportunity for Black people but also set the stage for racist backlash.

#### NOTE

As you debrief students’ concept maps, make sure to underscore that problems associated with ghetto life (e.g., crime, violence), are the result of environmental factors (e.g., overcrowding, poverty) and do not reflect any inherent qualities in the people who live in these communities.



## NOTE

The use of the term ghetto as described above evolved from its original meaning as the section of a city in which Jews were required to live. The first ghetto was established in 1516 in Venice, Italy, (near a *ghèto* or foundry), where Jews were gated in and forced to wear a sign of identification.

7

Provide the following background on the meaning of ghetto: Since the early 20th century, ghetto has been used in the U.S. to describe crowded, run-down and poor neighborhoods occupied by immigrants and working-class groups. Black people in the North were not forced to live in ghettos or segregated communities by law (as in the South), but poverty and racism gave them few other choices. Though ghettos are often understood to be places that are under-resourced, many also view these communities as sources of culture and pride.

8

Show the truTV video “Adam Ruins Everything—The Disturbing History of the Suburbs” [6:16]: <https://bit.ly/37wOSUT>. This video uses humor to explain the history of housing inequality and why so many Black people were confined to ghettos during the period of the Great Migration. After the video, discuss some of the following questions:

- What government policies led to housing segregation?
- What was “redlining”? How did it contribute to racism and segregation?
- As suburbs grew, what practices kept Black people from moving to them?
- What advantages did white people in the suburbs accumulate? How did these benefits lead to education, work and other opportunities?
- How did housing policies trap Black people in poverty?
- Why did segregation continue even after the government outlawed housing discrimination?
- In your own words, how would you explain the narrator’s statement that white suburbs were “built on a foundation of segregation”?

**9** Project or distribute the handouts *Urban Black Communities* and *Suburban Communities*, which show Levittown, New York, (discussed in the video) and other predominantly white and Black communities typical of the Great Migration era. Allow students to compare the settings and consider the disparate opportunities available to residents of each community. Have students devise a title for this collection of photos and do a few minutes of reflective writing that captures their thoughts and feelings in response to them.

**10** Point out that while housing inequality is an issue that continues even today, the situation has improved due to the work of activists who demanded change. Tell students that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. co-led the Chicago Freedom Movement in 1966, organizing marches and protests and uncovering discrimination in real estate practices. Distribute the handout *Excerpts from Chicago Freedom Festival Speech*, which is one of King's lesser-known addresses. In pairs or small groups, have students read the excerpts, highlighting key ideas and answering the questions that follow the passages.

**11** Review students' responses and answer any questions they might have. Note that Dr. King's work in Chicago contributed to the breakthrough Fair Housing Act of 1968—passed shortly after his death—which made it illegal to discriminate in the sale, rental and financing of housing based on race, religion or national origin (and later expanded to include sex, people with disabilities and families with children).

**12** Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the questions on the following page.

#### NOTE

The photos in this exercise are not indicative of the housing conditions for *all* Black or white Americans. There were many middle-class Black people and poor white people during the era of the Great Migration. However, these photos represent a pattern of segregation and wealth inequality that was driven by racism, persistent throughout the 20th century, and still reverberates today.





# Discussion Questions

1

What were the expectations of Black people who migrated from the South? Did the realities of life in the North match their expectations? Explain.

2

What qualities do you think it took to start life anew in an unfamiliar place?

3

If you imagine yourself as a migrant in a new neighborhood and school, what might be your hopes, fears or other feelings?

4

How did race play a role in creating segregated housing in the U.S.? What has been the impact on Black Americans, even today?

5

Do you live in or near any communities that are racially segregated? If so, how do you feel about this in light of the history you have learned?

6

What are your beliefs about living in a community that is racially and ethnically diverse as opposed to one where people are mostly from the same background? Do you think it matters? Why or why not?

# Lesson Extensions

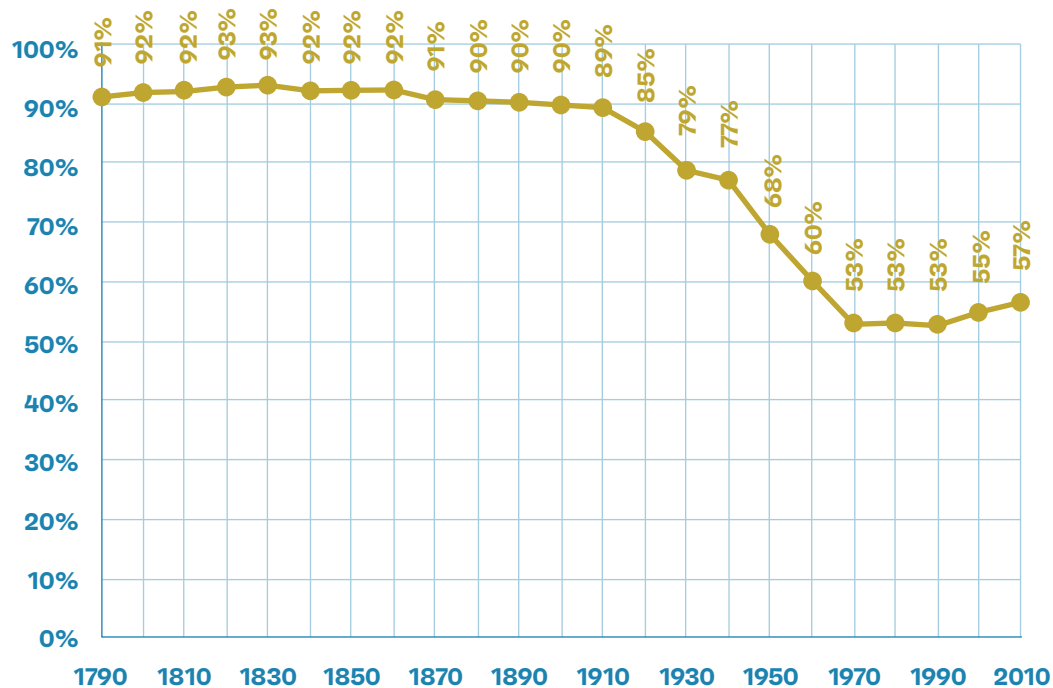
- Assign students to analyze some of the documents in the “Primary Source Set” on the Great Migration (see Additional Resources) to deepen their understanding of this period.
- Explore “The Migration Series” by African American artist Jacob Lawrence (see Additional Resources). This sequence of 60 panels depicts the experiences of Black people during the Great Migration. Have students write the story that some of the panels tell or create their own artwork portraying their understanding of the Great Migration.
- Show “The House We Live In” (see Additional Resources), which explores how housing policy has fostered segregation and racial inequality throughout our country’s history. It is the third episode of the PBS documentary *Race—The Power of an Illusion*, and is approximately 57 minutes long. See the activity featuring a clip from this video in the Unit 1 high school lesson, titled “Race and Public Policy: Constructing Whiteness with Segregated Housing Policy.”
- Assign students to research the demographic make-up of their own neighborhood and compare it to a neighboring area with a different make-up (perhaps a city if students live in a suburb, or vice versa). Have them look at differences in average income, per pupil spending and other data that might be available. Discuss any disparities that might be related to race and the impact these differences might have on community members.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Digital Public Library of America. “Primary Source Sets: The Great Migration.” <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-great-migration>.
- + Newark Public Library. “My Newark Story.” <https://npl.org/mynewarkstory>.
- + The Phillips Collection. “Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series.” <https://lawrencemigration.phillipscollection.org>.
- + PBS. *Race—The Power of an Illusion*. Episode 3: “The House We Live In,” <https://vimeo.com/601481660>.
- + RiseUp North. “Newark.” African Americans, Part 3 (First Great Migration), <https://bit.ly/2ZA5Du4>; African American Migration, Part 2, <https://bit.ly/3bsKhEi>.



# Percentage of Black Americans Living in the U.S. South



1 Describe the trend shown on the graph.

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2 What might have been happening in the U.S. to cause this trend?

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3 What questions does the graph raise for you?

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SOURCE: Jajhill. "Percentage of African American population living in the American South." August 12, 2015. Accessed February 17, 2021. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Percentage\\_of\\_African\\_American\\_population\\_living\\_in\\_the\\_American\\_South.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Percentage_of_African_American_population_living_in_the_American_South.png).

# The Great Migration



SOURCE: Siegel, Michael, *The Great Migration, 1900-1929*, 2005, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/85f0908d-8265-f747-e040-e00a18062131>.



# Letters from the Great Migration

These letters were published in *The Journal of Negro History* in 1919. They are from Black residents of the South who wanted to move to the North.

- What do they reveal about the *push* and *pull* factors leading to the Great Migration?
- What feeling do they express about the situation for southern Black people and their hopes for the future

---

## 1 LUTCHER, LOUISIANA, MAY 13, 1917

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Dear Sir:

I have been reading the Chicago defender<sup>6</sup> and seeing so many advertisements about the work in the north I thought to write you concerning my condition. I am working hard in the south and can hardly earn a living. I have a wife and one child and can hardly feed them. I thought to write and ask you for some information concerning how to get a pass for myself and family.

I dont want to leave my family behind as I cant hardly make a living for them right here with them and I know they would fare hard if I would leave them. If there are any agents<sup>7</sup> in the south there havent been any of them to Lutcher if they would come here they would get at least fifty men. Please sir let me hear from you as quick as possible. Now this is all.

Please dont publish my letter, I was out in town today talking to some of the men and they say if they could get passes that 30 or 40 of them would come. But they havent got the money and they dont know how to come. But they are good strong and able working men. If you will instruct me I will instruct the other men how to come as they all want to work.

Please dont publish this because we have to whisper this around among our selves because the white folks are angry now because the negroes are going north.

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## 2 SELMA, ALABAMA, MAY 19, 1917

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Dear Sir:

I am a reader of the Chicago Defender I think it is one of the Most Wonderful Papers of our race printed. Sirs I am writeing to see if You all will please get me a job. And Sir I can wash dishes, wash iron nursing work in groceries and dry good stores. Just any of these I can do.

Sir, who so ever you get the job from please tell them to send me a ticket and I will pay them. When I get their as I have not got enough money to pay my way. I am a girl of 17 years old and in the 8 grade at Knox Academy School. But on account of not having money enough I had to stop school.

Sir I will thank you all with all my heart. May God Bless you all. Please answer in return mail.

<sup>6</sup> *The Chicago Defender* is an African American newspaper, founded in 1905. It campaigned against Jim Crow era violence and encouraged Black people in the South to migrate north. *The Chicago Defender* stopped printing in 2019 and exists today online.

<sup>7</sup> "Agents" were representatives of northern companies sent to the South to recruit Black people to fill jobs. Southern states, angry that their cheap work force was being lured away, arrested labor agents and banned newspaper ads with job opportunities in the North.



# Letters from the Great Migration

## 3 LEXINGTON, MISSISSIPPI, UNDATED

My dear Mr. H --- :

I am writing to you for some information and assistance if you can give it.

I am a young man and am disable, in a very great degree, to do hard manual labor. I was educated at Alcorn College and have been teaching a few years: but ah: me the Superintendent under whom we poor colored teachers have to teach cares less for a colored man than he does for the vilest beast. I am compelled to teach 150 children without any assistance and receives only \$27.00 a month, the white with 30 get \$100.

I am so sick I am so tired of such conditions that I sometime think that life for me is not worth while and most eminently believe with Patrick Henry "Give me liberty or give me death." If I was a strong able bodied man I would have gone from here long ago, but this handicaps me and, I must make inquiries before I leap.

Mr. H ---, do you think you can assist me to a position I am good at stenography typewriting and bookkeeping or any kind of work not to rough or heavy. I am 4 feet 6 in high and weigh 105 pounds.

I will gladly give any other information you may desire and will greatly appreciate any assistance you may render me.



These migrants moved from Florida to New Jersey in 1940. What hopes do you think they had for the future?

### SOURCES:

Delano, Jack. *Group of Florida migrants on their way to Cranberry, New Jersey, to pick potatoes. Near Shawboro, North Carolina.* July 1940. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8c02701>.

Hanover College. "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918." <https://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/260GMigration.html>.

History Matters. "Sir I Will Thank You with All My Heart: Seven Letters from the Great Migration." <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5332>.





## Urban Black Communities, 1920s–1940s



Ida B. Wells Housing Project for Negroes, Chicago, Illinois, April 1941



Detroit Negro Quarter, 1929

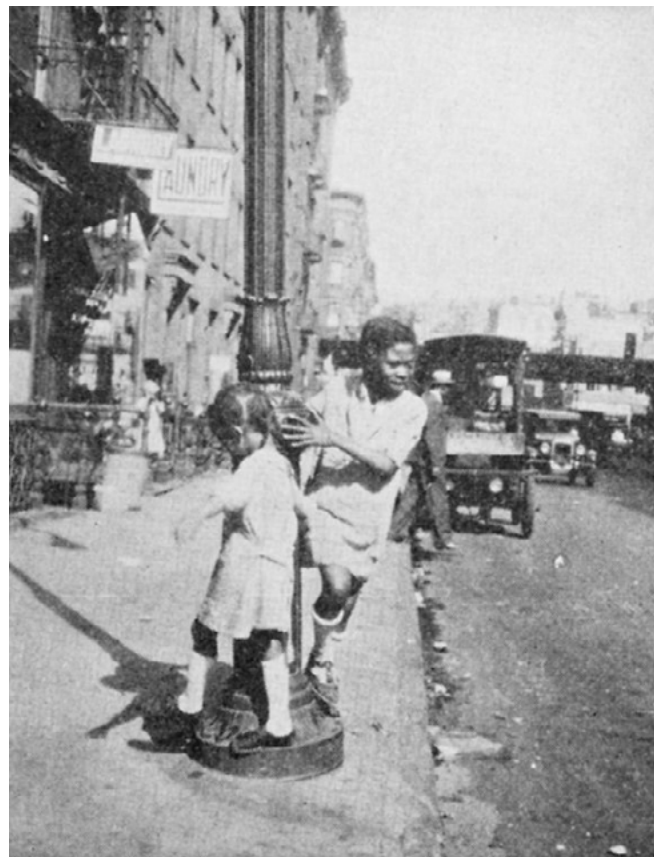
SOURCES: Lee, Russell. *Ida B. Wells Housing Project for Negroes, Chicago, Illinois, April 1941*. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://on.nypl.org/3bjcfm8>; *Housing, Detroit Negro quarter*. 1929. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://on.nypl.org/3k1LhDq>.



## Urban Black Communities, 1920s–1940s



Negro family living in crowded quarters,  
Chicago, Illinois, April 1941



There are few playgrounds in Harlem [New York City].  
Negro children must play on the streets.

SOURCES: Lee, Russell. *Negro family living in crowded quarters, Chicago, Illinois*, April 1941. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://on.nypl.org/2NpBScX>; *There are few playgrounds in Harlem. Negro children must play on the streets*. 1929. New York Public Library Digital Collections. <http://on.nypl.org/2Zv0L9B>.



## Suburban Communities, 1940s–1950s

Park Forest, Illinois, (near Chicago) and Levittown, New York, (near New York City) were both planned communities for veterans returning from World War II.



"If Dad's home, this must be a weekend. The men were away from the community all week. They made up for lost time on weekends, doing home improvements, playing with the kids, and participating in community groups."



Levittown NY  
Ranch Model circa 1950

SOURCES: Park Forest Public Library. "Building the backyard barbecue." <https://americanhistory.si.edu/america-on-the-move/city-and-suburb>;  
Mark Mathosian. "Levittown, L.I. N.Y." <http://bit.ly/2M5ehgU>.





# Suburban Communities, 1940s–1950s



**PRICE: \$7990!**  
**DOWN PAYMENT: Not a penny!**  
**MONTHLY CHARGES: \$58!**

EVERY WEEK, for twelve solid hours, every day of the seven days of the week, from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M., people are rising and paying about the sensational Levittown House of 1949.

They're all veterans, because only veterans can buy this remarkable house. And they're right in being excited. They don't need any down payment, and their monthly carrying charges are only \$58! That includes all taxes, water charges, free insurance, interest, and complete payment of the purchase price.

Now let's see what you get for \$7,990. It's the house pictured above in any one of five different designs, all with the same layout and features.

First, your grounds are 60 by 100, all leveled, landscaped, and shrubbed. Even fruit trees have been planted. Your living room overlooks the rear garden. And we mean it when we say "overlooks," because one entire wall—nineteen feet long—is in Thermopane glass from floor to ceiling! Think of it. A double-thick insulated wall made entirely of glass!

But that's only one of a hundred features that will leave you wide-eyed and open-mouthed. The fame of this house has spread over the whole world and it deserves it. Look at the fireplace that's open on two sides and works as a barbecue as well as the conventional way. Look at the closets, eight feet long, with sliding ventilated doors. Look at the built-in chests of drawers and the chromium, non-tagging rods.

And that kitchen! Nobody knows housework, but since you've got to do it, you might as well enjoy yourself. All cabinets are gleaming Tracy steel with a white porcelain finish. And gone is the old-fashioned sink that chipped every time you looked at it. Instead you'll see the stainless-steel, satin finish Tracy version with the built-in vegetable sprayer.

In one corner is the newest General Electric refrigerator, on the side, the G.E. range. In another corner, the Bendis Automatic DeLuxe Laundry with the special Levitt-designed stainless steel top.

There are so many things we could write about. For instance, the storage wall with the built-in desk, closet, book-shelves—and the entire wall revolves! Or the very newest aluminum Venetian blinds with the automatic slats. Or the great big open second floor that can easily be converted into two more bedrooms and another bath.

Sure we could talk about our shopping centers, our schools, our playgrounds, our athletic fields. We could show you our gorgeous swimming pools and adjoining kiddie pools—all yours at no charge if you live here. But after all, you've got to see all this yourself—so here's what you do:

Come out to Levittown anytime you want—today, tomorrow, any day—from 10 A.M. to 10 P.M. If you're a veteran file an application, leave a good-faith deposit of \$100, and you'll move in in October, at which time your deposit will be refunded. You won't pay anybody a single penny, and it'll only cost you \$58 a month thereafter to own your own home.

So hurry out, Mr. Kibbey. Pretty soon there'll be no more houses for October, and then it'll be for November, then December—and then ??? Then you won't have any home at all, and you can't say we didn't tell you.

Drive our Grand Central Parkway. Turn right in the bend marked "Southern Parkway." Leave at the forkmarked exit W-1 marked Levittown. From there you can't miss the Exhibit Home which is right on Hempstead Turnpike.

**Levitt and Sons**  
 INCORPORATED  
 EXECUTIVE OFFICES - MANHASSET - LONG ISLAND

This flier advertised Levittown, New York, in 1949.

"...Only veterans can buy this remarkable house...They don't need any down payment, and their monthly carrying charges are only \$58! That includes all taxes, water charges, free insurance, interest, and complete payment of the purchase price... Sure we could talk about our shopping centers, our schools, our playgrounds, our athletic fields. We could show you our gorgeous swimming pools and adjoining kiddie pools—all yours at no charge if you live here..."

SOURCE: Mark Mathosian. "Levittown, L.I. N.Y." <http://bit.ly/2M5ehgU>.



# Excerpts from Chicago Freedom Festival Speech

**Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., March 12, 1966**

The Negro has come North, crowding into...Black ghettos, seeking a promised land. Lured by the promises of a better life, he has found not a land of plenty but a lot [filled] with poverty...Instead of fulfilling his dreams, the Negro immigrant has found himself [in] festering slums on Chicago's Southside and Westside, in New York's Harlem, in Detroit's Paradise Valley and Black Bottom, [and] in Los Angeles' Watts...

The purpose of the slum is to confine those who have no power and [continue] their powerlessness. In the slum, the Negro is forced to pay more for less... In short, the slum is an invisible wall, which [holds back the progress] of persons because of the color of their skin...[and] leaves its inhabitants...segregated and humiliated at every turn.

[In 1960] forty-one per cent of all negro families in Chicago were reported living in dwellings that were dilapidated, deteriorating or lacking in plumbing services. Negroes were paying ten dollars a month more than whites for comparable rental units. At the same time, Negro purchasers paid on an average of \$1,500.00 more than whites when buying houses. On top of that, Negro home buyers paid higher interest rates... In effect, the Negro is forced to pay a color tax while



1966 Chicago Freedom Festival: Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Martin Luther King Jr., Rev. C.T. Vivian, Mahalia Jackson, Al Raby. Bob Fitch photography archive, Stanford University Libraries.

receiving less than whites in quality and service.

Racially segregated, slum housing [also has negative] effects on educational chances for Chicago's Negro school children. Slum housing...leads to...segregated schooling... Slum education lead[s] to lowered self-esteem and motivation on the part of Negro youngsters, lowered academic achievement, [and] higher dropout rates...

Yes, we must seek to lift ourselves by our own bootstraps, but it is a cruel [joke] to tell a bootless man to lift himself by his own bootstraps. The fact is that many Negroes have been so...crushed by the iron feet of

poverty that they have been left without a boot. A failure to realize this has often caused many middle-class Negroes to accept the judgment of many whites that they...are poor because they are lazy and lack initiative and moral fiber.

I received a letter the other day from a lady who argued that people who live on dirty streets could not hope to gain the respect of others. Therefore, she suggested that I organize a committee to buy brooms and get squads of women and children to sweep the streets. This, she said, would give them pride in themselves. This well-intentioned lady did not understand



## Excerpts from Chicago Freedom Festival Speech (continued)

that it is not the job of people to sweep the streets. It is the job of the Department of Sanitation. It did not occur to her that it would be better to organize the people to demand the services to which they are entitled...A nation that can spend billions of dollars to put a man on the moon, can spend billions of dollars to put a man on his two feet on earth.

Let us be dissatisfied until every...ghetto and rat infested slum is plunged into the junk heaps of our nation and Negroes and whites live side by side in decent, safe and sanitary housing. Let us be dissatisfied until every [sign] of segregated and inferior education will become a thing of the dark past and Negro and white children study side by side... Let us be dissatisfied until every handcuff of poverty is unlocked and work-starved men will no longer walk the streets in search of jobs that don't exist.



Many Black migrants to Chicago lived in a narrow strip of blocks on the South Side nicknamed the "Black Belt" or "Black Ghetto." One writer suggested using the less insulting name, "Bronzeville."

### THINK ABOUT IT...

- 1 How did the hopes of Black people who migrated north differ from the realities they faced once they arrived?
- 2 What did Dr. King mean when he compared the slum to an "invisible wall"?
- 3 Describe at least three ways in which segregated housing communities limit opportunities for Black people (then and now).
- 4 Why did Dr. King say that it is a "cruel [joke] to tell a bootless man to lift himself by his own bootstraps"? How does this relate to the woman who wanted community members to sweep the streets?
- 5 What changes do you think Dr. King was demanding through this speech?

PHOTO SOURCE: Lee, Russell. *Apartment building in Negro section of Chicago, Illinois*. April 1941. Retrieved from the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017743610>.



# TRANSFORMING THE BLACK EXPERIENCE



## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What were the causes and effects of the Great Migration? How did the hopes of Black Americans during the Great Migration match up with the reality of their lives in the North?



## OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Discuss the causes and effects of the Great Migration.
- Analyze primary source materials to understand the push and pull factors behind the Great Migration.
- Identify the achievements and barriers to opportunity for Black people in the North, particularly New Jersey.
- Research the impact of artists who shaped the cultural experiences of Black Americans during the period of the Great Migration.



## LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



## TIME NEEDED

135 minutes + time for research



## MATERIALS

- AV equipment to show a video and maps
- *In the News: 1916–1921* handout (one per student)
- *The Great Migration: Underlying Causes* handout (one to project or one per student)
- *The First Great Migration and The Second Great Migration* maps (one copy to project)
- *New Jersey and the Great Migration* handout (one per student)
- *Sources: New Jersey and the Great Migration* handout (one to project or one per small group)



## VOCABULARY

chain migration

emigration

exodus

ghetto

Great Migration

Harlem Renaissance

Jim Crow

migration/migrate

New Negro Movement

oppressive

Red Summer

segregation

slum

urban

# Procedures

## PART 1

### Push and Pull Factors (60 mins.)

- 1 Divide the class into small groups and distribute copies of the handout *In the News: 1916–1921*. Have groups conduct a “3-2-1” analysis of the news items using the process below. Then gather the class and discuss their findings. Chart key themes and questions that arise.
  - 3—Record three trends that were taking place from 1916–21 based on the headlines.
  - 2—Record two reasons for these trends based on evidence in the texts and your prior knowledge.
  - 1—Record one question you have as a group after analyzing the news headlines.
- 2 Write “The Great Migration” on the board and allow students to share any prior knowledge they have about this term. Define *migration* as the act of moving from one place to another. Explain that from 1916–1970, more than 6 million Black Americans migrated from their homes in the South to northern, midwestern and western parts of the U.S. Project the handouts *The First Great Migration* and *The Second Great Migration* and review the maps together, exploring migration patterns during this era.
- 3 In their notebooks, have students divide a page into two columns and label one “Push Factors” and the other “Pull Factors.” Explain that they will take notes on the reasons why Black Americans fled the South (push factors) and were drawn to the North and West (pull factors). Allow them time to record notes based on what they have already discovered.
- 4 Project or distribute the handout *The Great Migration: Underlying Causes*, a 1920 editorial from the *Providence Journal*. As a class or in small groups, have students read the piece and discuss/record major push and pull factors according to the writer. Ask students to identify examples that illustrate some of the following phrases in the

commentary: “oppressive conditions”; “unjust treatment... by the mob”; “enactment of State laws for...humiliating and degrading”; “fairness of the Northern white man”; “and constitutional rights.”

## 5

Show the Black History in Two Minutes (or So) video, *Migrations: From Exodusters to Great Migrations* [3:37]: <https://bit.ly/3fW6I90>. Have students continue to record push and pull factors as they watch. Afterwards, review students’ observations and discuss some of the following questions.

- What are examples of the “systematic erosion of rights” that plagued southern Black communities after the period of Reconstruction?
- According to the video, what three conditions did Black people seek through migration? [*equal rights, personal safety and economic opportunity*]
- What role did World Wars I and II have in the migration of Black Americans from the South?
- What is a “Black urban population hub”? What have been some of the challenges and benefits of these hubs?
- In your view, what were the two or three most important push and pull factors behind the Great Migration? Explain your thinking.

## PART 2

### Life in New Jersey (45 mins.)

## 6

Tell students that perhaps no other northern state was more affected by the Great Migration than New Jersey. Project the statistics<sup>8</sup> below and have students reflect on them in pairs. Ask students to identify one challenge and one benefit they think Black migrants to New Jersey might have experienced based on these population figures.

- Between 1910 and 1930, New Jersey’s Black population more than doubled, from 88,000 to over 200,000. This growth was more than any other northern state.
- Of the 21 northern cities in 1930 that had Black populations over 10,000, four—Newark, Atlantic City, Camden and Jersey City—were in New Jersey.

<sup>8</sup> Sources: PBS Learning Media, “The Great Migration—New Jersey: Then and Now,” <https://bit.ly/3dqj2sw>; Wright, Giles R., *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: a short history* (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1989), 54–78.

- Between 1940 and 1980, New Jersey's Black population more than quadrupled, from about 227,000 to 925,000, with Black people comprising almost 13 percent of the population—the highest percentage ever in the state's history up until that time.

**7** Tell students that they will read and record notes about life in New Jersey for Black people during the period of the Great Migration. Divide the class into small groups and distribute chart paper and markers, and the handout *New Jersey and the Great Migration*. Review the instructions with students. Have groups transpose the graphic organizer on the handout onto a large sheet of chart paper.

**8** Project or distribute the handout *Sources: New Jersey and the Great Migration*. Assign each group one to two text resources, varying the assignments so that groups don't all examine the same readings. (Visual resources are included for students who may not be able to manage difficult texts.) Direct groups to collaboratively add notes to their charts as they read and discuss.

**9** Have groups post their charts. Then gather the class and discuss some of the following questions.

- What were some of the major achievements of Black migrants to New Jersey?
- What were the greatest barriers to full equality for Black migrants to New Jersey?
- Do you think life in New Jersey met the expectations of Black migrants? Explain.
- How did the Great Migration change the lives of Black people? How did it change New Jersey?

### PART 3

#### An Outpouring of Culture (30 mins. + time for research project)

**10** Post the quote below. In pairs or as a class, ask students to interpret the author's words.

*"Art must discover and reveal the beauty which prejudice and caricature have overlaid"* —Alain LeRoy Locke, 1925

#### NOTE

Alain LeRoy Locke (1885–1954) was an educator, philosopher, writer and a Black gay man from Philadelphia, who described himself as the "midwife" to aspiring Black writers. Locke was an important part of the New Negro Movement and known as the "Father of the Harlem Renaissance." In *The New Negro* (1925) and other writings, Locke advocated for a more forthright Black national consciousness, assertiveness in response to the status quo and transformation through Black art and culture.

**11** Comment that Locke and other leaders—during the era of the first Great Migration—encouraged a new kind of Black pride that could be lifted through art and culture. The result was a flourishing of literature, art and music that celebrated the experiences of Black people. As an example, show the two short videos about Paul Robeson from the PBS Learning Media series “New Jersey: Then and Now”—*Robeson at Rutgers University* [1:14] and *An International Star* [1:37]: <https://bit.ly/3d3spC9>. Discuss how Robeson overcame prejudice to become one of the greatest artists and activists of the 20th century.

**12** In groups, have students research one of the following notable artists, who all came from New Jersey and thrived during the time of the Great Migration.

- Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961): editor, poet, essayist and novelist from Lawnside, NJ
- Paul Robeson (1898–1976): actor, singer, writer and activist from Princeton, NJ
- William James “Count” Basie (1904–1984): jazz pianist, bandleader and composer from Red Bank, NJ
- Jacob Lawrence (1917–2000): painter from Atlantic City, NJ
- Sarah Vaughan (1924–1990): jazz singer from Newark, NJ

**13** Assign groups to create a “one-pager” reflecting the achievements of the artist they researched. The “one-pager” is a physical or digital page on which students convey their insights creatively through the arrangement of quotes, narrative text, symbols and images. Their work should interpret rather than summarize, and should address some of the following questions:

- How did the artist overcome prejudice or other challenges in their life?
- How did the artist reflect, celebrate or change the Black experience?
- What is the artist’s legacy? What impact did the artist make on U.S. society?

**14** Display the “one-pagers” and have students conduct a “gallery walk” in which they observe and take note of their peers’ work. Conclude the lesson by discussing some of the questions on the following page.



# Discussion Questions

1

What were the most significant push and pull factors behind the Great Migration?

2

What is your reaction to the following quote from Isabel Wilkerson (author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*): “Perhaps it is not a question of whether the migrants...were pushed or pulled to their destinations, but a question of how they summoned the courage to leave in the first place or... found the will to press beyond the forces against them...”?

3

Did the reality of life in the North reflect the hopes and aspirations of Black migrants? Explain.

4

It has been said that Black migrants didn’t ask for acceptance but rather declared themselves as equals. What examples illustrate this idea?

5

What achievements of Black Americans during the era of the Great Migration most stood out to you? Why?

6

What have been the lasting effects of the Great Migration on the United States?

7

How does the Great Migration compare with other migrations that you are aware of in history or today?

# Lesson Extensions

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + CBS Chicago. "Red Summer: The Pain And Lessons Of The 1919 Chicago Race Riots." July 26, 2019. YouTube video, 4:10. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HutkX-D5Wvn4>.
  - + Digital Public Library of America. "Primary Source Sets: The Great Migration." <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-great-migration>.
  - + New Jersey State Library. "Letters of Black Migrants to the Chicago Defender (1917)." <https://bit.ly/3abukmp>.
  - + Rowan University. "African American Contributions to the History of New Jersey: Some New Jerseyans of Note." <https://bit.ly/3uNOACg>.
  - + PBS Learning Media. "New Jersey: Then and Now." <https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/new-jersey-then-and-now>.
  - + Warren Hills Regional School District. "Create a Migrant's Scrapbook from the First Great Migration." <https://bit.ly/3dJx8lf>.
  - + Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Vintage Books, 2011.
- Have students view Jacob Lawrence's *Migration Series*, a sequence of 60 panels published in 1941 that depict the experiences of Black people during the Great Migration (<https://bit.ly/3dYemgm>). The final panel in the series ends with the words, "And the migrants kept coming." Have students respond to this idea of an ongoing migration by creating their own piece and sharing their #Panel61 at <https://bit.ly/3mNMWhp>.
  - There is a body of poetry that explores the feelings and experiences of Black people during the period of the Great Migration. Have students read one or more of the poems below (or other related works) and respond to the themes of the poetry through discussion, artwork or writing a poem of their own.

*Bound No'th Blues* by Langston Hughes

*Bound for the Promised Land* by Mr. Ward

*The Land of Hope* by William Crosse

*Migration* by Walter Dean Myers

*One-Way Ticket* by Langston Hughes

*The South* by Langston Hughes

*When I Return to the Southland It Will Be* by Sparrell Scott
  - The Great Migration was bookended by riots across the United States. The "Red Summer" of 1919 was the culmination of growing racial tensions resulting from the migration of Black people northward, economic decline, competition over jobs and housing and the demand among Black people for equal opportunity. During what was referred to as the "Long Hot Summer of 1967," more than 150 riots broke out in response to frustration among Black people about societal inequalities, including unemployment, abusive policing and poor housing. Have students research a riot in one city in 1919 and one city in 1967 and conduct a comparison of the causes and effects of the unrest in each time and place.
  - *The New York Times* op-ed columnist Charles Blow moved to Atlanta, Georgia, after 25 years in New York. He has proposed that other Black Americans in the North also return to the South in order to establish political power in the region where they were once oppressed. Have students research two to three news articles by Blow or others about the idea of a "great reverse migration" and write an essay in which they argue the pros and cons of such a movement.



## In the News: 1916–1921

### SOUTH UNABLE TO PUT STOP TO NEGRO EXODUS

Laborers Get Past State  
Guards in Migration to  
North.

300 PASS THROUGH CAPITAL

Leader of Party, During Stop  
Here, Tells How Charges  
Got Through.

The Washington [D.C.] Times, October 26, 1916

### MEN

#### Come to the Aid of Your Country

Now is the time to show UNCLE SAM  
what you can do to help win this WAR.  
We are making Brake Shoes and Cast-  
ings for our Government, and we need  
your help.

We want Twenty good, strong Labor-  
ers to learn Drop Machine Molding,  
and we will pay 42 cents per hour  
while learning.

Our Drop Machine Molders make from  
\$7 to \$8 per day. Come and see for  
yourself. No Labor Trouble whatever.

ASK FOR MR. SANDERS

AMERICAN BRAKE SHOE AND  
FOUNDRY COMPANY

4516 WEST 26TH ST., CHICAGO

The Chicago Defender, October 26, 1918

### AGENT IS HELD FOR ENTICING NEGROES

GREENWOOD, S. C., March 28.—J.  
B. Maddox, white, claiming Gaines-  
ville, Ga., as his home, was arrested  
here today on a charge of enticing  
negro labor to Northern cities.

The arrest followed an investiga-  
tion of several weeks by county au-  
thorities, and officers declare they  
have a clear case against him.

It is charged that he was paid \$2.50  
for each immigrant and that he ad-  
vanced one-half of the railroad fare,  
which was returned to him after the  
negroes went North.

During the last six months several  
hundred negroes have left Greenwood  
county for Northern cities, particu-  
larly Detroit, Philadelphia and Jer-  
sey City. In a number of instances  
large farmers are without help to  
plant this year's crop.

Maddox has operated a loan ex-  
change and several public service cars  
for months.

The Atlanta Georgian, March 28, 1917

### HELP WANTED—MALE MEN!!

If you are seeking employment, come to Mil-  
waukee, Wis. Wages \$2.50 to \$6.00 per day.  
Board and lodging reasonable.

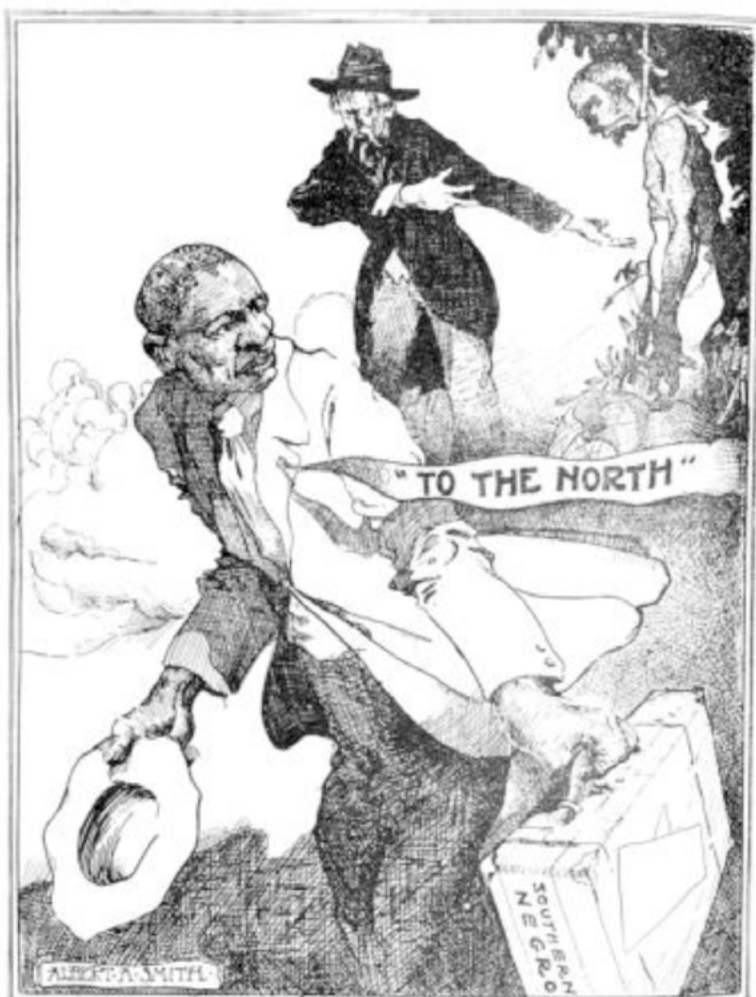
For further information call on or address  
THE BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SOCIAL AND  
INDUSTRIAL CENTER, 318 Cherry St., Mil-  
waukee, Wis. J. S. Woods, Warden. J.  
Walter Minon Jr., Secretary.

The Chicago Defender, December 1, 1917

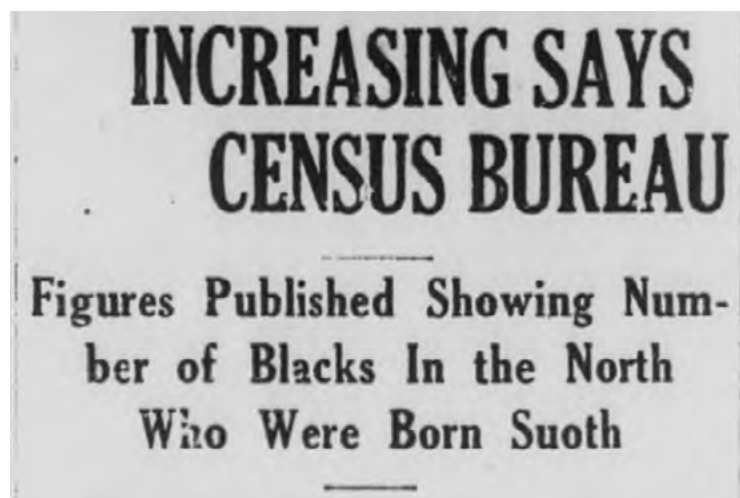




## In the News: 1916–1921



"The Reason," The Crisis, March 1920 [New York]



The Lakeland [FL] Evening Telegram, December 17, 1921

### Colored People Leaving the South

(By the Associated Negro Press.)

Memphis, Tenn.—Saturday and Sunday night, for a number of weeks from four to six coaches are attached to the regular trains as "extras" to carry the Colored passengers bound for Northern communities. This northern migration has kept up all during the summer, and many predicted that it would cease when fall weather set in, but such has not been the case to date. Not only are the people going North, families of those who have gone before, but hundreds who have never before been North, also are going.

### Negroes to California

(By the Associated Negro Press.)

Los Angeles, Calif.—The possibility of Colored people taking the place of Asiatics as farm workers in California, was discussed today at the national convention of the Industrial and Commercial Council of People of African Descent.

W. H. Sanders, a Los Angeles delegate, said he was in direct touch with at least 5,000 Colored men who will come to California to take up truck gardening in case persons of oriental races are barred from further colonization in this state. He said the workers would be headed by graduates of the agricultural department of Tuskegee Institute. Generally, however, the Colored people look upon the exclusion of Japanese as racial discrimination.

The Kansas City [MO] Sun, October 9, 1920



## Sources—In the News: 1916–1921

"Agent is Held for Enticing Negroes." *The Atlanta Georgian*, March 28, 1917. Old Magazine Articles. <https://bit.ly/3t03DbC>.

"Colored People Leaving the South" and "Negroes to California." *The Kansas City Sun*, October 9, 1920. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. <https://bit.ly/3fNuN1D>.

"Help Wanted—Male." *Chicago Defender*, December 1, 1917. General Research and Reference Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. <https://bit.ly/3dlakZs>.

"Increasing Says Census Bureau." *The Lakeland Evening Telegram*, December 17, 1921. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. <https://bit.ly/3sYHbzH>.

"Men, Come to the Aid of Your Country." *The Chicago Defender*, October 26, 1918. Warren Hills Regional School District. <https://bit.ly/3dJx8lf>.

Smith, Albert A. "The Reason." *The Crisis*, March 1920. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division, The New York Public Library. <https://on.nypl.org/3wBWQHi>.

"South Unable to Put Stop to Negro Exodus." *The Washington Times*, October 26, 1916. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Library of Congress. <https://bit.ly/3rZOFRm>.



# The Great Migration: Underlying Causes

Editorial from the Providence Journal, October 31, 1920:

## Underlying Causes

### of Negro Migration

To the Editor of the Sunday Journal:

In an editorial appearing in the Bulletin a few days ago headed "States That Have Lost in the Census," I notice the large migration of negroes, especially from Mississippi, was attributed to the higher wages they are promised for their labor in the large manufacturing cities in the Northern States, and the question was raised as to whether they are "better off" by the change of environment.

Permit me to say a word, as one who was born in the South and know something of the tradition of the South by virtue of frequent visits and personal contact with Southern sentiment, in regard to the attitude of the average white man toward the negro. I regret to have to confess that it is not the desire particularly for higher wages and the glare of city life, but it is the hope of getting away from the oppressive conditions which obtain in practically all the Southern States; the unjust treatment not only inflicted by the mob, but by the enactment of State laws for the express purpose

of humiliating and degrading the negro.

To leave behind these intolerable conditions is the reason the negro has turned his face northward, believing in the justice and fairness of the Northern white man. The negro comes North with no idea of seeking social equality, but asking only for his constitutional rights which are guaranteed to all men, and finally the negro is convinced that the only way to obtain and have enforced these amendments to the national Constitution is to migrate to States which do not discriminate against any group on account of its color or creed.

WILLIAM H. HIGGINS, M. D.  
Providence, Oct. 28.

#### Transcript:

To the Editor of the Sunday Journal: In an editorial appearing in the Bulletin a few days ago headed "States That Have Lost in the Census," I notice the large emigration of negroes, especially from Mississippi, was attributed to the higher wages they are promised for their labor in the large manufacturing cities in the Northern States, and the question was raised as to whether they are "better off" by the change of environment.

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WILLIAM H. HIGGINS, M.D., Providence, Oct. 28





# The First Great Migration

From 1916–1940, about 1.6 million Black Americans relocated from the rural South mostly to the industrial North.



SOURCE: Siegel, Michael, *The Great Migration, 1900–1929*, 2005, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/85f0908d-8265-f747-e040-e00a18062131>.



# The Second Great Migration

From 1940–1970, more than 5 million Black Americans relocated from the South to the North, Midwest and West.



SOURCE: Siegel, Michael, *The Second Great Migration, 1930-1980*, 2005, New York Public Library Digital Collections, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/b93075d4-71ef-b68b-e040-e00a18065b36>



# New Jersey and the Great Migration

African American historian Henry Louis Gates Jr. identifies the following three conditions, sought by Black Americans who migrated from the South: **equal rights**, **personal safety** and **economic opportunity**. As you read about life in New Jersey during the Great Migration, record ways in which these three conditions were both achieved and obstructed. Include information in the following areas:

- **Employment**—opportunities and discriminatory practices
- **Housing**—segregation, the rise of ghettos and the pros and cons of Black population hubs
- **Education**—opportunities and inequality, including segregation
- **Institutions**—growth of black businesses and organizations (religious, social, political, civic, cultural)
- **Conflict and Struggle**—white resistance to migration and the rise of Black civil rights movements

<b>EQUAL RIGHTS</b> How were they achieved and obstructed?	<b>PERSONAL SAFETY</b> How was it achieved and obstructed?	<b>ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY</b> How was it achieved and obstructed?



# Sources: New Jersey and the Great Migration

The following resources explore life in New Jersey during the period of the Great Migration.

## TEXT RESOURCES

- 1 *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History* by Giles R. Wright, New Jersey Historical Commission, <https://bit.ly/3mxVzwc>
  - 1910 to 1940 (pages 54–68)
  - 1940 to 1980s (pages 68–78)
- 2 New Jersey African American History Curriculum Guide, The New Jersey State Library, <https://bit.ly/3t90LcC>
  - Unit 9: World War I and the Great Migration, 1915–1920, <https://bit.ly/3myBLc1>
  - Unit 10: The Decade of the Twenties: From the Great Migration to the Great Depression, <https://bit.ly/3dJAeMo>
- 3 Rise Up North: Newark, <http://riseupnewark.com>
  - Chapter 1: Pre-1950s—African Americans Part 3: First Great Migration, <https://bit.ly/2ZA5Du4>
  - Chapter 2: 1950-1960—African Americans Part 2: Who's Coming In, Who's Going Out?, <https://bit.ly/3bsKhEi>

## VISUAL RESOURCES

- 4 The Newark Public Library—My Newark Story, <https://npl.org/mynewarkstory>
    - The Great Migration: From the South to Newark, <https://bit.ly/2NEJPL1>
- PBS Learning Media Videos—New Jersey: Then and Now, <https://bit.ly/39VLd4a>
- *The Great Migration* [1:27], <https://bit.ly/3d0e5KC>
  - *Social Effects of the Great Migration* [2:39] <https://bit.ly/3d0e5KC>

## UNIT FOUR

# GLOSSARY

### **13<sup>th</sup> Amendment**

this change to the U.S. Constitution, ratified after the Civil War in 1865, abolished slavery in the United States

### **activist**

a person who works to bring about change and fights for a cause they believe in

### **blackface**

a type of makeup used to imitate Black people and considered to be inappropriate today

### **chain gang**

the practice of chaining prisoners together to perform forced labor, such as road construction or farming

### **chain migration**

the process by which migrants from a certain town or community follow others from that area to a new destination

### **civil rights**

the freedoms guaranteed to citizens that protect them from discrimination and ensure equality for all people

### **convict leasing**

a system in which mostly southern states hired out prisoners to perform forced labor for private business in exchange for a fee

### **discrimination**

unfair treatment of a person or group based on prejudice

### **emigration**

the act of leaving one place in order to settle in another location

### **exodus**

the departure of a large number of people from a particular place or region

### **generalization**

a statement or idea that takes one or a few facts and applies them more broadly; taking small examples and using them to make bigger points

### **ghetto**

a neighborhood that is crowded, run-down and poor

### **Great Migration**

from 1916–1970, about 6 million Black people moved from the U.S. South to the North and West to escape segregation and in search of better housing, work and education opportunities

### **The Green Book**

a guidebook published from 1936–1966, which listed restaurants, hotels, gas stations and other places friendly to Black people taking road trips during the era of Jim Crow segregation

### **Harlem Renaissance**

the period in the 1920s and 1930s, centered in the Manhattan neighborhood of Harlem, in which Black culture and arts flourished

### **housing project**

a building or group of buildings funded by the government in order to keep rents affordable for working people

### **inequity**

injustice or unfairness

### **involuntary servitude**

a legal term for a person being forced to work against their will to benefit another individual, business or government

**Jim Crow**

a fictional minstrel character created in the 1830s, depicting a clumsy and dim-witted enslaved man; "Jim Crow" was a common insult for Black people

**Jim Crow laws**

laws in place from 1876–1965 that segregated (separated) Black people from white people and limited their opportunity to vote, hold jobs, get an education and enjoy other freedoms

**mass incarceration**

the unique way in which the U.S. has imprisoned large numbers of people, especially people of color

**migration/migrant**

the act of moving from one place to another/a person who moves from one place to another to find work or better living conditions

**minstrel show**

an American form of racist entertainment that was popular from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, in which mostly white actors put on blackface and mocked Black people through songs, dances and comedy

**the "new Jim Crow"**

the mass incarceration and control of Black people through the criminal justice system, including prison, probation and parole

**New Negro Movement**

the development, during the 1920s, of a renewed sense of Black pride, cultural expression, economic independence and political change

**oppression/oppressive**

the condition of being controlled in cruel and unfair ways

**redlining**

a process by which banks and other lenders refuse to offer home loans on an equal basis to customers due to the racial makeup of their neighborhood

**Red Summer**

a period in 1919 during which white supremacist terrorism and racial riots took place in dozens of U.S. cities, partly in response to the growth of the Black population in the North

**segregate/segregation**

separate/the act of keeping different groups separate from each other; de jure segregation is enforced by law while de facto segregation refers to separation by "fact" or custom

**"separate but equal"**

In the court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racially separate facilities, if equal, did not violate the Constitution; the Court later reversed this idea in the case *Brown v. Board of Education*, when it ruled that segregation is a form of discrimination.

**sit-in**

a type of protest where people gather in a place and refuse to leave; during the 1950s and 1960s, sit-ins at lunch counters were held to protest segregation in restaurants and other spaces

**slum**

a run-down area of a city with poor living conditions

**stereotype**

a generalization about a person or group without regard for individual differences; the false idea that all members of a group are the same and think and behave in the same way

**suburban**

a community located outside but close to a city

**urban**

a city or the people who live in a city

**vagrancy**

the state of being without a home or job; following the Civil War, vagrancy laws were unfairly used to arrest Black people for not working, working at jobs unrecognized by whites or gathering in public places



## BREAKING BIAS: LESSONS FROM THE AMISTAD

# Alignment of Lessons to NJ Student Learning Standards, Social Studies

### UNIT 4

#### GRADES 3–5

#### LESSON

#### PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

The Cruelty  
of Jim Crow  
Segregation

Seeking a Better  
Life

6.1.5.CivicsPD.2: Explain how individuals can initiate and/or influence local, state, or national public policymaking (e.g., petitions, proposing laws, contacting elected officials).



6.1.5.CivicsPD.3: Explain how and why it is important that people from diverse cultures collaborate to find solutions to community, state, national and global challenges.



6.1.5.CivicsDP.2: Compare and contrast responses of individuals and groups, past and present, to violations of fundamental rights (e.g., fairness, civil rights, human rights).



6.1.5.CivicsHR.2: Research and cite evidence for how the actions of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and other historical civil rights leaders served as catalysts for social change and inspired social activism in subsequent generations.



6.1.5.CivicsHR.4: Identify actions that are unfair or discriminatory, such as bullying, and propose solutions to address such actions.



6.1.5.CivicsCM.1: Use a variety of sources to describe the characteristics exhibited by real and fictional people that contribute(d) to the well-being of their community and country.



6.1.5.CivicsCM.6: Cite evidence from a variety of sources to describe how a democracy depends upon and responds to individuals' participation.



6.1.5.GeoPP.6: Compare and contrast the voluntary and involuntary migratory experiences of different groups of people and explain why their experiences differed.



6.1.5.EconET.1: Identify positive and negative incentives that influence the decisions people make.



6.1.5.HistoryCC.2: Use a variety of sources to illustrate how the American identity has evolved over time.



6.1.5.HistoryUP.1: Describe the reasons various groups, voluntarily and involuntarily, immigrated to New Jersey and America, and cite evidence from multiple perspectives to describe the challenges they encountered.



**GRADES 6–8**
**LESSON**
**PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

	The Struggle Against Jim Crow Segregation	Opportunities and Challenges in the North
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6.1.8.CivicsDP.3.a: Use primary and secondary sources to assess whether or not the ideals found in the Declaration of Independence were fulfilled for women, African Americans and Native Americans during this time period.


**GRADES 9–12**
**LESSON**
**PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

	Jim Crow and the Roots of Mass Incarceration	Transforming the Black Experience
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6.1.12.HistoryUP.2.b: Analyze the impact and contributions of African American leaders and institutions in the development and activities of Black communities in the North and South before and after the Civil War.



6.1.12.HistoryUP.2.c: Explain why American ideals put forth in the Constitution have been denied to different groups of people throughout time (i.e., due process, rule of law and individual rights).



6.1.12.CivicsDP.4.b: Analyze how ideas found in key documents contributed to demanding equality for all (i.e., the Declaration of Independence, the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions, the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address).



6.1.12.CivicsDP.5.a: Analyze the effectiveness of governmental policies and of actions by groups and individuals to address discrimination against new immigrants, Native Americans and African Americans.



6.1.12.EconNM.8.a: Analyze the push-pull factors that led to the Great Migration.



6.1.12.HistoryCC.8.a: Make evidence-based inferences to explain why the Great Migration led to heightened racial tensions, restrictive laws, a rise in repressive organizations and an increase in violence.



6.1.12.HistoryCC.8.c: Identify the conditions that gave rise to the Harlem Renaissance and assess the impact of artists, writers and musicians on American culture.



6.1.12.HistoryCC.11.c: Explain why women, African Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and other minority groups often expressed a strong sense of nationalism despite the discrimination they experienced in the military and workforce.



6.1.12.HistoryCC.13.c: Determine the impetus for the Civil Rights Movement and generate an evidence-based argument that evaluates the federal actions taken to ensure civil rights for African Americans.



6.1.12.HistoryCA.14.b: Create an evidence-based argument that assesses the effectiveness of actions taken to address the causes of continuing racial tensions and violence.



**PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

Jim Crow and the Roots of Mass Incarceration	Transforming the Black Experience
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6.1.12.HistoryCA.14.c: Determine the influence of multicultural beliefs, products (i.e., art, food, music and literature), and practices in shaping contemporary American culture.



6.1.12.HistorySE.14.a: Explore the various ways women, racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community and individuals with disabilities have contributed to the American economy, politics and society.



6.1.12.HistorySE.14.b: Use a variety of sources from diverse perspectives to analyze the social, economic and political contributions of marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or individuals.

