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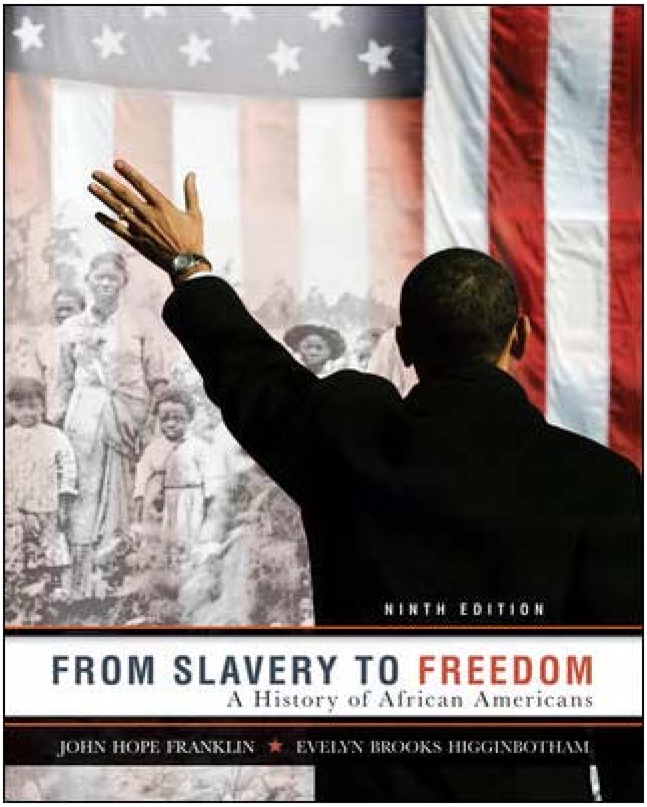
Chapters 1, 16, and 23


NINTH EDITION
FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM
A History of African Americans
JOHN HOPE FRANKLIN ★ EVELYN BROOKS HIGGINBOTHAM

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CHAPTER 1

Ancestral Africa

An Ancient Land and People

Early Commercial Networks

African Slavery

The Great Empires

Other States

Timbuktu's Sankore mosque

Built in the 15th century, it became a great international center of scholarly and cultural life in the 16th century. *Photograph by Alan Huffman; published in* The Washington Post Magazine, *February 27, 2005, p. 12.*

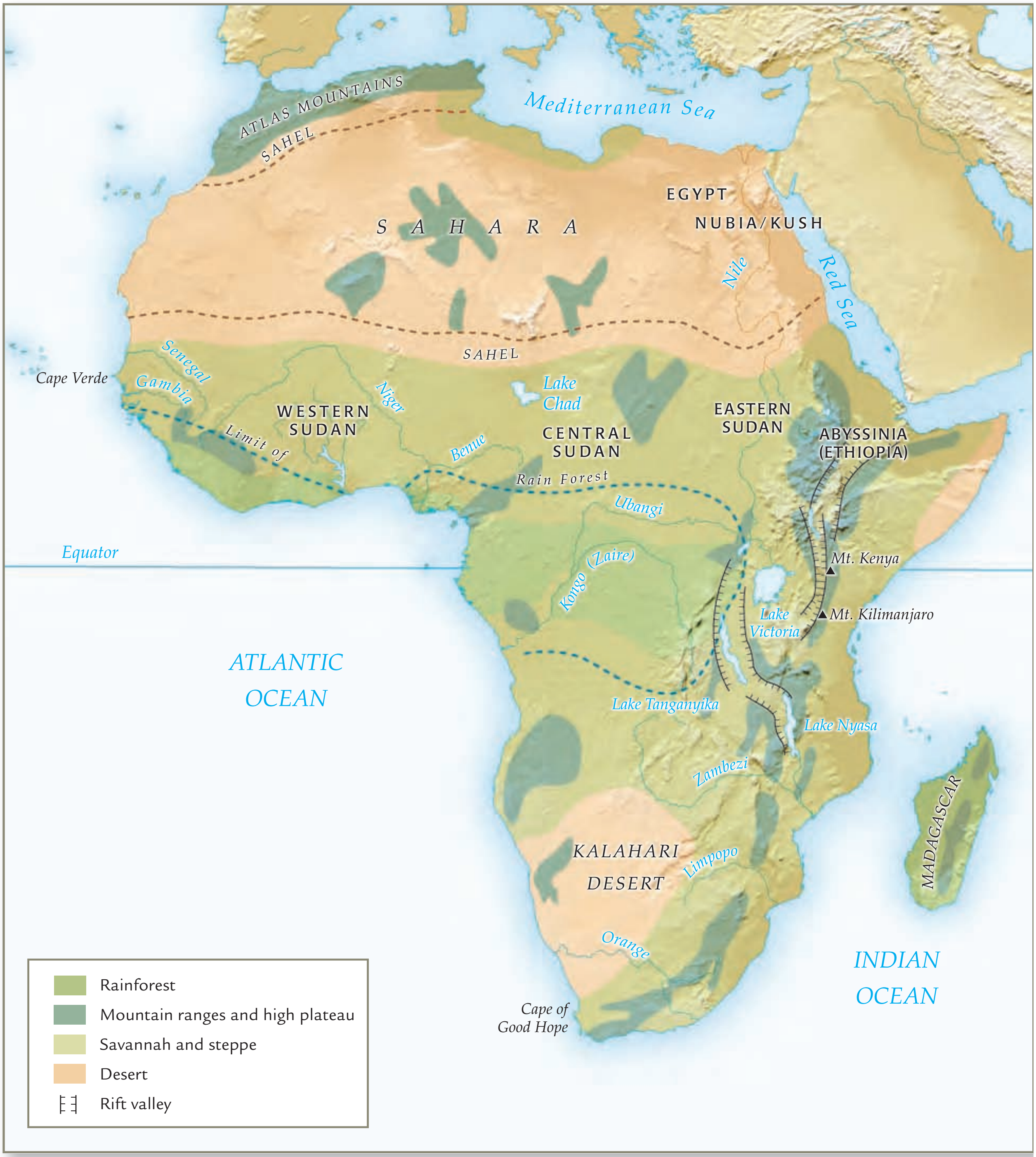
In 1906 the black social scientist W. E. B. Du Bois, at the time a history professor at Atlanta University, marveled at the new scholarship on the African past that was introduced to him by the white anthropologist Franz Boas in an address to the Atlanta graduating class. Boas's recounting of the great African empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhay between the tenth and fifteenth centuries left Du Bois quite literally speechless. This knowledge gave him a newly found pride in his African heritage. "All of this I had never heard," Du Bois later confessed in the preface to his 1939 book *Black Folk: Then and Now,* "and I came then and afterwards to realize how the silence and neglect of science can let truth utterly disappear or even be unconsciously distorted."

A century later, Africa is no longer known as the "Dark Continent," as it was commonly called in Du Bois's time. During the second half of the twentieth century, an array of scientific tools and methods contributed mightily to dispelling the myth and misinformation concerning Africa. With the 1974 discovery in Ethiopia of the fossil remains of "Lucy," one of the earliest known hominids, scientists now acknowledge that Africa is the continent from which humankind arose more than three million years ago.

Several decades of archaeological work have progressively refuted many longstanding theories about "outside cultural influences" on the ancient African civilizations that flourished several thousand years ago. Copper working, iron smelting, artistry, commerce, and early state formation—once attributed to non-African groups—are today recognized as emerging from groups and conditions indigenous to sub-Saharan Africa. Longstanding theories have been either refuted, such as the introduction of iron technology into Africa by non-African peoples, or seriously questioned, such as the theory of the Almoravid (Moroccan Berber) conquest of the Empire of Ghana in 1076. Other mysteries have been confronted as well. The digital technology of the 1990s in connection with social scientific research has provided a clearer picture of the number of slaves brought to the New World, thus bringing significant resolution to what seemed like an interminable debate on this subject—a debate to which Du Bois himself contributed in his first book, *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade* (1896). As new scholarship sheds greater light on the number and the ethnic pattern of slave shipments, it exposes not only European culpability but also the complicity of the African elite in the Atlantic slave trade. What Du Bois perhaps would find most gratifying is DNA sequencing by which today's descendants of this human commerce can locate their ancestral regions and identify their African ethnic heritage.

An Ancient Land and People

More than three times the size of the United States mainland, the African continent has historically encompassed a vast range of peoples and environmental conditions. Most of the continent lies within the tropics (in what environmentalists call the *intertropical convergence zone*), leaving only the northern and southern tips with a moderate, Mediterranean climate. In West Africa, from which the majority of slaves in the Atlantic slave trade came, various ecological zones are distinguishable, so that (moving from north to south) the Sahara produced salt; the Sahel, livestock; the Savannah, cereals; and the forest region, gold and kola. This ecological diversity affected social development in meaningful ways. For example, livestock can exist only in areas free of the tse tse fly—the insect that spreads trypanosomiasis (a fatal animal disease itself has changed significantly over the centuries. Between 300 B.C.E. (Before the Common


ATLAS MOUNTAINS
SAHEL
Mediterranean Sea
EGYPT
NUBIA/KUSH
SAHARA
Nile
Red Sea
SAHEL
Cape Verde
Senegal
Gambia
Niger
WESTERN SUDAN
Limit of
Lake Chad
Benue
CENTRAL SUDAN
Rain Forest
EASTERN SUDAN
ABYSSINIA (ETHIOPIA)
Ubangi
Equator
Kongo (Zaire)
Mt. Kenya
Lake Victoria
Mt. Kilimanjaro
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Lake Tanganyika
Lake Nyasa
Zambezi
MADAGASCAR
KALAHARI DESERT
Limpopo
Orange
INDIAN OCEAN
Cape of Good Hope
🟩 Rainforest
🟩 Mountain ranges and high plateau
🟩 Savannah and steppe
🟧 Desert
Rift valley

African climate and its impact on development

Era) and 1500 C.E. (Common Era), the Sahara region experienced progressively drier periods, a process known as *desiccation,* interrupted by occasional wet periods. Some scholars attribute resulting scarcer resources for early warfare and slavery.

The findings of historical linguistics have, in recent years, revealed ancient patterns of migration on the continent. Africa has about two thousand languages, which can be classified into four very different linguistic groups: Koisan in southern Africa; Afro-Asiatic in northern Africa; Nilo-Siharan in north-central Africa; and Niger-Congo in equatorial and southern Africa. The native languages of most African peoples belong to the Niger-Congo linguistic group, consisting of more than 1,400 different languages, the majority (more than five hundred) of which are Bantu. Scholars explain this linguistic dominance through the thesis of Bantu Migration.

The Bantu Migration

Briefly put, according to this thesis, Bantu speakers, who originally lived in what is today eastern Nigeria and southern Cameroon, cultivated yams and oil palms as they moved through the tropical rain forests and the adjoining savannas. Around 2000 B.C.E. they began to migrate in two waves—one to the south and the other to the east and southeast. The latter wave incorporated cereal cultivation in the Great Lakes region in eastern Africa—a vast area including modern Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and portions of Tanzania, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Equipped with this agricultural knowledge, this group continued southward—in the course of their journey pushing aside, isolating, or absorbing other linguistic populations, most notably the Khoisan speakers in southern Africa. Eventually these Bantu-speaking peoples linked up with the wave of Bantu-speakers who earlier had migrated directly to the south. Linguists characterize this long, complex process of Bantu migration as a series of encounters and adaptations that caused the interconnectedness of various groups. Archaeologists' discovery of early iron-age pottery between the equator and the borders of South Africa also supports this interpretation of Bantu expansion. The pottery's rims, dimpled bases, and other decorative patterns reveal what one scholar has called "a general family relationship."

Iron Technology

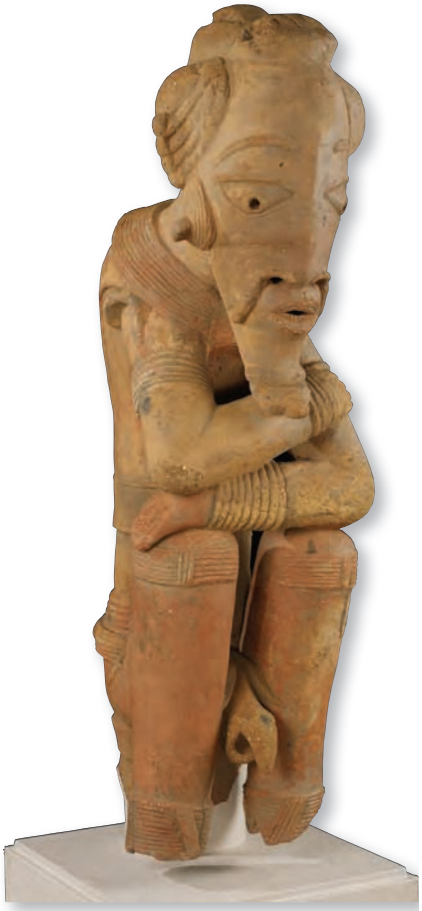
Not until the mid-twentieth century did archaeological methods of radio-carbon dating confirm the indigenous African origins of iron technology. Good-quality steel was produced by Africans as early as 600 B.C.E. in the Sahara desert fringe, an area today called the Jos Plateau of northern Nigeria. The iron findings, which included knife and ax blades, arrows, and fragments from an iron-smelting furnace wall, refute claims that iron smelting was introduced to Africa from an external, nonblack civilization. A preheating device, called a *tuyére,* which blasts hot air into a fiery furnace, has been shown to be indigenous to Africa and distinctively different from contemporaneous European techniques. In African societies, iron working was a highly skilled craft, one that conferred status and prestige and that was usually limited to members of a particular lineage or social group. Indeed, ironworkers were often thought to possess magical-religious powers. In the Yoruba culture, the deity Ogun was believed to be the god of iron.

The ancient Nok people of the Jos Plateau have been identified by archeologists as an early iron-age society. Important excavation sites in this region at Taruga and Samun Dukiya suggest that, as early as 500 B.C.E, the Nok lived in organized, permanent settlements that were centers of both agriculture and iron work. Numerous stone axes and iron instruments used by the Nok have been excavated, as well as beautiful terracotta figures and pottery from this early period.

Nok Pottery and Sculpture

Nok terracotta figures, first unearthed in 1943 during tin mining operations on the Jos Plateau between the Niger and Benue rivers in Nigeria, are the most ancient extant examples of figurative African sculpture, as well as the oldest evidence of advanced, organized society in sub-Saharan Africa. Employing modern technologies such as thermo-luminescence testing and radio-carbon dating, scientists date the Nok figures from 500 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. Fabricated from local clay, often mixed with gravel and fired in kilns, the terracotta Nok works are generally hollow human or animal figures of coil construction. Nok animal figurines are relatively realistic, whereas the portrait sculptures reveal a significant degree of stylization. Most surviving Nok pieces are heads that were once part of full-body figures. The heads appear disproportionately large, with facial features that include triangular-shaped eyes, flared nostrils, and full lips. Nok portrait heads are distinguished by meticulous renderings of elaborate hairstyles and jewelry, thus reflecting a culture that appreciated and emphasized bodily adornment.

Like most clay works, many of the Nok pieces were constructed by using an additive process. This technique produced a finished product by assembling parts together. Skillful Nok sculptors applied *slip* (a clay-water mixture) to the coil-constructed figures, producing a smooth, even surface. However, more than two millennia of erosion have made the once smooth exteriors of the figures appear grainy. The similarity of the Nok pieces to the brass and terracotta portrait-sculpture traditions of the later Ife Yoruba and Benin cultures suggests that the Nok culture may be their early ancestor.



Nok figure—Nok peoples, northern Nigeria, ca. 250 B.C.E.

Archaeological digs in the western-Sahara region also indicate that copper was smelted as far back as 570 to 400 B.C.E. For example, archaeologists have unearthed cylindrical copper-smelting furnaces, as well as copper bowls and spear points in present-day Mauritania. The use of copper and copper alloy was widespread in ancient Africa. Copper mines were indigenous to West Africa, and copper was a highly valued metal of commerce, exported and imported in the trans-Saharan trade in the form of bars, rings, and other artifacts. Copper was used extensively in West Africa and was important to the trans-Saharan trade. In 1353 C.E. the celebrated Arab geographer Ibn Battuta visited the copper mines of "Takedda," now identified with an ancient Hausa town in the Central Sudan that prior to the fifteenth century was famous for its copper mines and commercial vitality. In Benin, bronze and copper implements and art objects testified to the great skill of the smiths there, and many artisans, including those of the Yoruba lands and Mali, devoted considerable skill to making ornamental objects from silver and gold.

Copper Technology

Dating from around 1400 C.E., Akan smiths in Ghana crafted innumerable copper pieces. African craftsmen used a variety of methods, including hammering, twisting, and casting, to transform imported copper into such forms as bars, rings, wires, bells, and a variety of accessories, sculptures, and plaques. These skilled artisans used the lost-wax method to create copper-alloy weights. In this technique, an object is first shaped in clay, which is then hardened and next covered with wax and an outer layer of clay; when fired, the wax melts and runs off, leaving a hollow mold into which molten metal can be poured, casting the final product. Called an *abrammuo,* the resulting weight was used to measure gold dust.

The weights had to conform to standard units of measure. Small enough to be easily portable, the weights were used to ensure fairness in gold transactions. Each party to a transaction would use his or her own *abrammuo* and a hand-held balance to verify the amount of the

Weight *(abrammuo)*—Akan peoples, Ghana, fifteenth–early eighteenth century

gold to be traded. Early examples of weights (1400–1700 C.E.), such as the one pictured here, tend to be geometric, whereas later weights (1700–1900) depict a variety of realistic figures, especially animals.

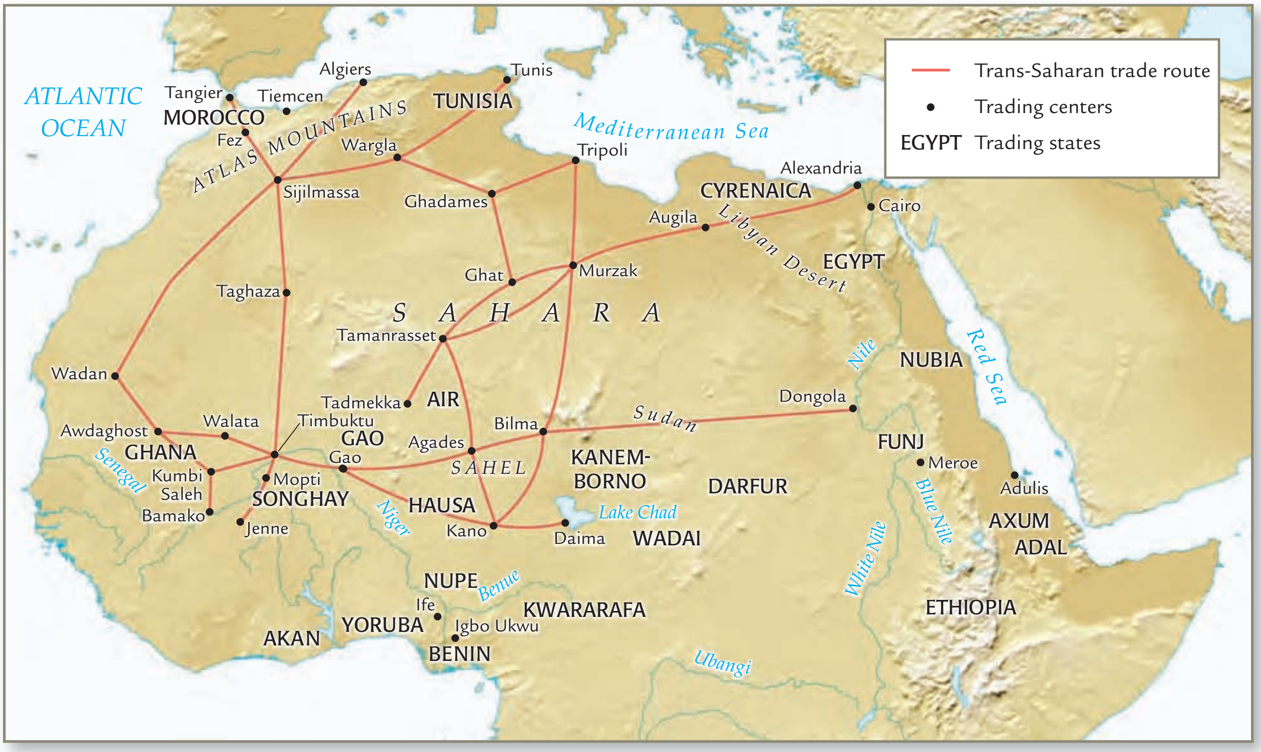
Early Commercial Networks

Ecological conditions in Africa shaped economic possibilities and made specialization and trade necessary. Certain villages, for example, specialized in fishing; others were known for metallurgy; still others for making weapons and utensils. Where such specialization was practiced, traders traveled from place to place to barter and purchase, returning laden with goods that they sold within their own communities. The trans-Saharan trade with the Muslim world, well underway by the ninth century C.E., brought West African peoples in contact with goods from as far north as the Mediterranean and as far east as Egypt. The merchants exchanged their wares—mostly luxury items—some having been procured from even more distant places by Muslim merchants, who in turn crossed the Sahara by caravan en route to the countries of the Sudan.

Evidence abounds of West Africans' trade with the outside world in the first millennium C.E.—in the appearance of new items such as glass beads, in traveler's reports, and in local records written in Arabic. These early documents also comment on the riches of Africa. Gold was Africa's most valuable trade item with both Arabs and Europeans before the discovery of the New World. Ninth-century Muslim travelers wrote of the gold-producing areas of Africa; the kingdom of Ghana was called the "land of the gold." In the eleventh century, at the height of Ghana's empire, the dominant source of gold was in Bambuk, where the Senegal and Faleme rivers meet. In the twelfth century, Bure on the Upper Niger had become prominent as a gold source, and around the fourteenth century gold also came from the Akan forest farther south.

West African Trade Routes

Specific West African groups came to dominate the long-distance trade. Known as *dyula* (or *djula*), these traders represented families, groups of families, and specific ethnic groups, such as the Mande-speaking traders who traveled from the Upper Niger area southward to the Lower Guinea coast. They utilized a complex system of weights and measures, as well as such forms of money as gold and cowry shells. They married across ethnic groups, establishing settlements as part of their commercial network, thus creating dispersed communities of self-identified traders. To facilitate commercial relations, the dyula developed their own pidgin—a contact language employing vocabulary and grammar borrowed from the differing languages of people who have to communicate with one another. They were among the earliest converts to Islam. Making use of language and law to guide their trading activities, they brought Islam to the African interior.


Trans-Saharan trade route
Trading centers
EGYPT Trading states
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Mediterranean Sea
Red Sea
Tangier
Tlemcen
Algiers
Tunis
MOROCCO
Fez
ATLAS MOUNTAINS
TUNISIA
Wargla
Tripoli
Alexandria
Cairo
Sijilmassa
Ghadames
CYRENAICA
Augila
Libyan Desert
EGYPT
Ghat
Murzak
Taghaza
S A H A R A
Tamanrasset
Nile
NUBIA
Wadan
Tadmekka
AIR
Dongola
Awdaghost
Walata
Timbuktu
GAO
Bilma
Sudan
FUNJ
GHANA
Senegal
Agades
Gao
SAHEL
KANEM-BORNO
Meroe
Kumbi Saleh
Mopti
SONGHAY
DARFUR
Adulis
Bamako
Niger
HAUSA
Lake Chad
Blue Nile
AXUM
Jenne
Kano
Daima
WADAI
ADAL
NUPE
Benue
White Nile
Ife
KWARARAFA
ETHIOPIA
AKAN
YORUBA
Igbo Ukwu
BENIN
Ubangi

The pilgrimages of African kings and emperors who converted to Islam did much to create trade routes and stimulate commercial activity. Africa was therefore never a series of isolated, self-sufficient communities but an area of far-flung interests based on agriculture, industry, and commerce. The effects of such contacts were immeasurable. Trade routes became highways over which cultures as well as goods traveled. Africa gave much of its own culture to others and received much in return.

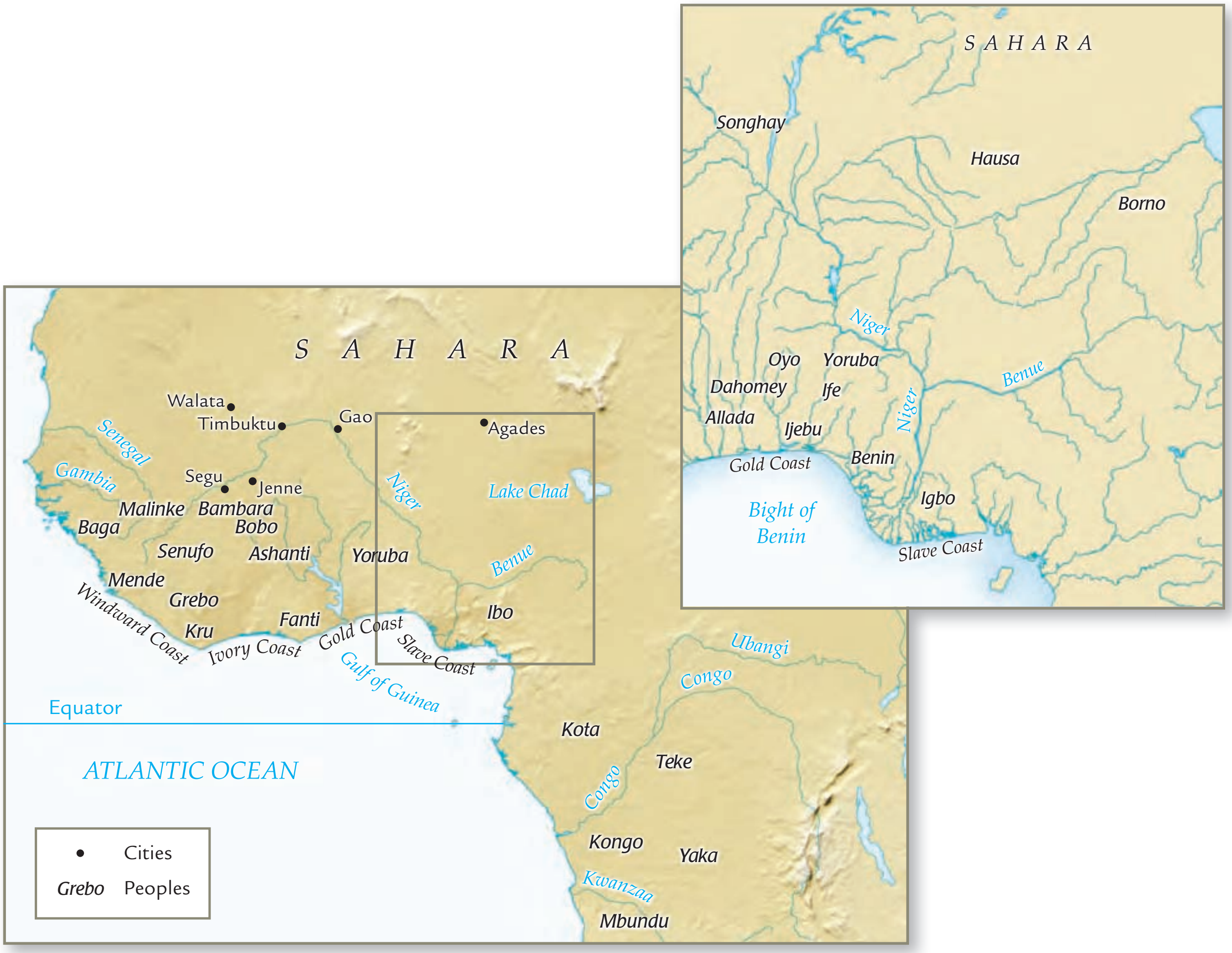
Trans-Saharan trade routes

Ancient trade routes connected sub-Saharan West Africa to the Mediterranean coast. Among the commodities carried southward were silk, cotton, horses, and salt. Among those carried northward were gold, ivory, pepper, and slaves.

A thriving trade making use of numerous inland waterways linked African ethnic groups to one another in regional networks even before the trans-Saharan trade arose, and certainly before Europeans came into commercial contact with Africans. Archaeological and ecological evidence from Kintampo, in modern-day Ghana, reveals food production in the late Stone Age period from 1450 to 1300 B.C.E. The terracotta utensils, polished stone axes, and pottery excavated at the site suggest early trade relations among the peoples of the upper woodland areas of the Volta basin and on the Accra plains. Archaeological findings also point to the role of first-millennium-C.E. regional trade along the Senegal and Niger rivers in the later rise of the Soninke empire of Ghana and in the growth of such cities as Jenne, which eventually became a famous intellectual center under the Mali and Sonhay empires. Archaeological evidence, too, suggests that African rice was cultivated by a wetland method at least 3,500 years ago in the flood plains of the upper Niger between Segu and Timbuktu in Mali and that this form of cultivation spread down the Gambia River to the Senegambia coast.

Interregional Trade

The great rivers of West Africa—the Niger, the Senegal, the Gambia, the Benue, and the Volta—made interregional trade possible. In his account of the twelfth-century Sudan,

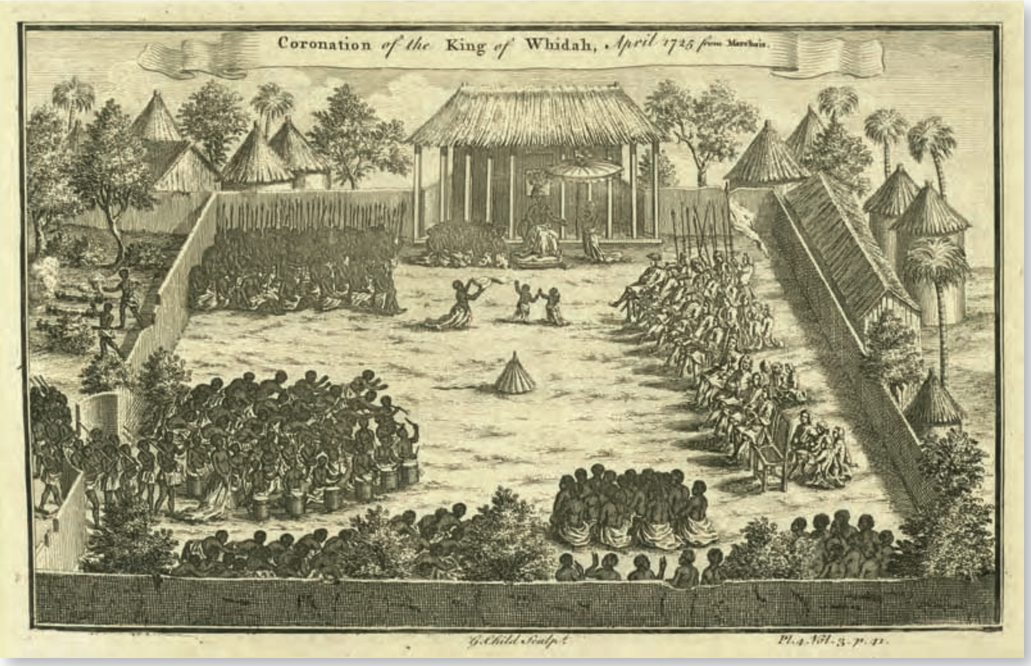

SAHARA
Songhay
Hausa
Borno
Niger
Oyo
Yoruba
Dahomey
Ife
Allada
Ijebu
Niger
Benue
Gold Coast
Benin
Igbo
Bight of Benin
Slave Coast
SAHARA
Walata
Timbuktu
Gao
Agades
Senegal
Gambia
Segu
Jenne
Niger
Lake Chad
Malinke
Bambara
Bobo
Baga
Senufo
Ashanti
Yoruba
Benue
Mende
Grebo
Windward Coast
Kru
Fanti
Ivory Coast
Gold Coast
Slave Coast
Ibo
Gulf of Guinea
Ubangi
Congo
Equator
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Kota
Teke
Congo
Kongo
Yaka
Kwanzaa
Mbundu
● Cities
Grebo Peoples

West Africa river system

the Muslim traveler Al-Idrisi describes "the strongly made boats" of the people of Ghana. Early Muslim writers erroneously called these rivers the "Nile [Nil] of the Blacks," thinking them extensions of the Nile in Egypt. Interlacing lakes, lagoons, and streams formed a riverine system that facilitated extensive trade between coastal areas and communities considerably farther inland. In West Central Africa, African traders sold their goods along the coastal waterways between the Zaire and Kwanzaa rivers.

African merchants used slaves, as well as draft animals, to carry their cargo along the overland trade routes that connected to rivers. For the trans-Saharan trade, West African gold and kola was transferred from boat to camel and then carried northward. West African merchants involved in the southern trade to the sub-Saharan regions conducted an extensive commerce from the Niger to the Senegal River and from the Senegal to the Gambia River. River systems figured significantly in the indigenous African slave trade, and their interlocking character would later facilitate the Atlantic trade along the West African coast.

A lagoon trade provided nearly unbroken communication for 400 miles from the westernmost kingdoms of Allada and Ouidah (Wydah) eastward to Lagos and to Benin farthest


Coronation of the King of Whidah, April 1725 from Marchais.
G.Child Sculp.
Pl.4.Vol.3.p.41.

Coronation of the King of Whydah

east. Muslim travelers and others wrote extensively of such rivers as the Senegal, the Gambia, the Niger, the Benue, the Volta, and the Kwanzaa. In 1508 a Portuguese traveler described the lagoon trade through the Lagos area of the Yoruba kingdom of Ijebu as a canoe-borne trade of cloth and slaves that moved along the coastal lagoons and streams spanning the area between the Volta River and the Niger delta. Historian John Thornton thus argues: “Not only did the Niger-Senegal-Gambia complex unite a considerable portion of West Africa, but the Niger provided a corridor that ultimately added Hausaland, the Yoruba States, and the Nupe, Igala, and Benin kingdoms to a hydrographic system that was ultimately connected to the Atlantic.”

Internal Slave Trade

A significant portion of slaves came from decentralized societies far in the interior. These stateless, or *acephalous,* societies formed small rural communities located in the region between the forest states and large savanna states and such middle-Niger cities as Jenne and the Hausa city-states. With less organization and fewer resources, the acephalous societies were weak, which made their people more vulnerable to capture. Once the Atlantic slave trade began, captives were carried via the waterways that had long brought commerce from the interior to the coast. Indeed, European traders would call the water routes the “slave rivers.”

African Slavery

Slavery existed from the earliest known history of Africa. The ancient Egyptians enslaved various groups of people—Semitic, Mediterranean, and Nubian blacks. Slavery also existed throughout sub-Saharan Africa and comprised a range of statuses and experiences, some of which were similar to chattel slavery, some to serfdom, and some to dependent family membership. Moreover, slave status could and often did change within one’s lifetime. In the four centuries leading up to European contact with Africa, slavery differed little from slavery in the Muslim world. Slavery figured prominently in Islamic societies, where slaves were viewed as inhabiting a temporary state of legal exclusion and as having the same spiritual value as a freeborn person. Muslim slaves were allowed to marry, to have a family and independent income, and to purchase their freedom. This was the general view in Islam from about the eighth century, when the religion began to penetrate sub-Saharan Africa.

However, unfree status was not unique to Africa or unique to other peoples of color. European communities embraced forms of coerced labor, even chattel slavery, prior to and during the early Middle Ages. Before the rise of feudalism, slaves were predominantly drawn from the Slavic heartland of Eastern Europe (hence the word *slave,* related to *Slav*). It was not until the fall of Constantinople in 1453, when Europe was severed from the Balkans, that it turned its attention to Africa for slaves, although some blacks had already trickled in through the Muslim trade. David Pelteret's exhaustive study of early medieval England reveals the prevalence of slaves of European descent. Investigating late Anglo-Saxon and early Norman England between 875 and 1125, Pelteret has shown that slave status was defined by law as resulting from birth, war captivity, and various forms of punishment. Slaves represented more than 10 percent of the English population in 1086, although slavery declined throughout the eleventh century and ended altogether in the later decades of the twelfth century. Nonetheless, in sixteenth-century England it was common for vagrants and the poor to be rounded up, imprisoned, and bound to forced labor.

Slavery in European Communities

Serfdom, another form of forced labor, has a long history in Eastern Europe. Unlike slaves, who were chattel (objects of property like animals and tools), serfs were considered persons with certain legal rights. They were bound to specific plots of land from which they supported themselves and paid tribute to the nobility, and to the state they owed taxes and military service. The treatment of serfs was coercive and harsh, however. The emancipation of Russian serfs occurred in 1861, just a few years before black slaves were freed in the United States.

In Africa, rulers and political elites used slaves as attendants, in positions of administrative trust, as soldiers and agricultural and household workers, and as laborers in mines. As noted earlier, African merchants purchased slaves for carrying goods on trade caravans. In some cases, enslaved persons represented members of the same ethnic group and came from the ranks of debtors, persons unable to pay court fines, and the poor, who for protection had placed themselves and their children in the service of a wealthy individual. Military and political dissidents within the same ethnic group could also end up in slavery. However, slaves more often came from a different ethnic group, usually a conquered political rival, and the warfare that fed the internal slave trade would escalate once trade relations were established with European nations.

Slaves in Africa

In the indigenous African trade, most slaves were women. Female slaves were purchased as wives, concubines, household servants, and agricultural laborers. Male slaves were used as miners, porters, craftsmen, herdsmen, brewers, soldiers, traders, and attendants. The internal trade, as well as the trans-Saharan trade, tended to favor women over men at a ratio of 2 to 1, the opposite gender ratio of the Atlantic slave trade, in which men far exceeded women. In contrast, slavery internal to Africa preferred women and children precisely because they could be more easily assimilated into local kinship groups. It is also interesting that women tended to perform the majority of agricultural labor in Africa. This, along with their natural reproductive capacity, resulted in the high valuation of women's labor.

The uniqueness of women in African labor systems, as compared to European, is best evidenced by comparing the marriage practice of African bridewealth and that of the European dowry. Bridewealth is given by the man's family to the woman's family, as compensation for the economic loss of a daughter's labor upon marriage. The dowry, in contrast, is brought by a woman to a man upon marriage, suggesting remuneration to the man for taking on a dependent. Historians and anthropologists have noted that bridewealth is found in parts of the world where women are more highly valued, both for their productive labor in cultivating the soil and for their reproductive labor in bearing children. These realities were reflected in the widespread African practice of polygamy, especially by powerful men, whose wealth was augmented by having several wives.

Slaves and Status

Slave ownership, or "wealth in persons," served to validate status and prosperity in Africa, which unlike Europe did not relate wealth to private ownership of land. In African societies, land ownership was collective rather than private. In no circumstance could a single African farmer sell or rent land to another, as in Europe, although an African farmer could own and sell the products of the land. Land in Africa fell under the control of the state or the kinship group, which by tradition was identified as the descendants of the land's ancestral settler. Such descendants claimed hereditary use and trusteeship of the land. For some groups, a territorial deity was believed to have bequeathed the land to a particular lineage.

In African society slaves were often able to harness considerable control over their lives and even enjoy wealth and influence. Thus some scholars, instead of posing "personal freedom" as the opposite of slavery, speak of a "continuum" or varying levels of unfree status in traditional Africa, with slavery at one extreme and normal lineage relations at the other. Such arguments negate the utility of the word *freedom* in its western context, emphasizing that historically in Africa social relations have been based on the group rather than the individual. For example, Igor Kopytoff and Suzanne Miers note that in early Africa, where freedom was equated not with individual liberty but with belonging, holding a subservient but nonetheless protected position within a household unit could in certain instances be perceived more positively than in contexts that link freedom and liberty. Referring to ancient Near Eastern societies, especially Babylonia and Egypt, sociologist Orlando Patterson conveys similarly that in societies where slaves could become wealthy, freedom was not in and of itself a "valued state," since becoming free could entail "a loss of status and power."

Slaves in the Economy

However, slavery as a form of property in persons meant that slaves could be bought, sold, or given to someone else. The importance of slaves to the economies of different African states varied, from a domestic and thus marginal role to a more significant role. The rulers of the kingdoms of Kongo and Ndongo in West Central Africa used military and other slaves in administrative posts to collect tribute from the dense slave populations living in villages near their respective capitals. A spectrum of statuses could be found in Wolof slavery, from the privileged status of military slaves to the low status of agricultural workers. Interestingly, in regard to Wolof agricultural production, slaves worked in a gang-labor format reminiscent of New World plantations. An eyewitness account of Wolof field slaves in 1685 described sixty slaves, weeding and working the soil, to the "sound and rhythm of the energetic music of six griots, who played drums and sang."

In Africa, the prevalence of slaves in many capacities, the presence of an internal slave trade as well as the centuries-old trans-Saharan slave trade with Muslim North Africa, and the existence of a slave-owning class of merchants and state officials all helped to set the stage for the commercial network that linked Europeans and complicit Africans in the capture and sale of other human beings.

The Great Empires

The first of the great West African states of which there is any record is Ghana, which lay about 500 miles northwest of its modern namesake. It was also known by its capital, Kumbi Saleh. Although its accurately recorded history does not antedate the seventh century C.E., there is evidence that Ghana's political and cultural history extends back perhaps into the first century C.E. Ghana first appears in history as a confederacy of settlements extending along the grasslands of the Senegal and the upper Niger rivers. Most public offices were hereditary, and its social order was stratified. The people of Ghana enjoyed some prosperity as farmers until continuous droughts turned their land into desert. As long as they were able to carry on their farming, gardens and date groves dotted the countryside, and there was an abundance of sheep and cattle in the outlying areas.

Ghana's Trading Empire

They were also a trading people, and the town of Kumbi Saleh was an important commercial center during the ninth century. By the beginning of the tenth century, Kumbi Saleh had a native and an Arab section, and the people were gradually adopting Islam. In the eleventh century, Ghana had a large army and a lucrative trade across the Sahara desert. The Arab writer Al-Bakri, having gained his knowledge of the Sudan through written and oral travel narratives, noted at the time that "the king of Ghana, when he calls up his army, can put 200,000 men into the field, more than 40,000 of them archers." From the Muslim countries came salt, wheat, fruit, and sugar. Caravans laden with textiles, brass, pearls, and salt crossed the Sahara Desert to Ghana, where these imports were exchanged for ivory, slaves, and gold. Ghana's king, recognizing the value of the trade, taxed imports and exports and appointed a collector to look after his interests. At the height of its power, the Soninke empire of Ghana extended as far north as Tichit in present Mauritania and south to the gold mines of the valley of the Falémé River and the Bambuk Mountains in present-day Mali and Senegal. The yield from these mines supplied the coffers of the Soninke rulers, who also traded the gold for other luxury goods brought by caravan across the Sahara.

In faraway Cairo and Baghdad, Ghana was a subject of discussion among commercial and religious groups. In 1063 Tunka-Menin ascended to the throne of Ghana, having succeeded his maternal uncle. Tunka-Menin reigned over a vast empire, imposing taxes and tributes that were collected by provincial rulers. Al-Bakri described Tunka-Menin as a ruler who "led a praiseworthy life on account of his love of justice and friendship for the Muslims." The king, however, did not practice Islam. Tunka-Menin is described as living in a castle surrounded by round-shaped huts, the entire area fortified by a fenced wall. His palace displayed sculpture, pictures, and windows decorated by royal artists. The grounds also contained temples in which native gods were worshipped, a prison in which political enemies were incarcerated, and the tombs of preceding kings. In the late eleventh century, Ghana suffered economic decline, brought on by a series of droughts that dried up the important Wagadu and Bagana districts. Under such trying circumstances, Ghana was easy prey to waves of conquerors in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Oral tradition maintains that the Sosso people, once under the rule of Ghana, vanquished Ghana and extended their dominion over the area in the twelfth century.

Window in Time

Al-Bakri on the Royal Court of Tunka-Menin, King of Ghana, 1068

He sits in audience or to hear grievances against officials in a domed pavilion around which stand ten horses covered with gold-embroidered materials. Behind the king stand ten pages holding shields and swords of his country wearing splendid garments and their hair plaited with gold. The governor of the city sits on the ground before the king, and around him are ministers seated likewise. At the door of the pavilion are dogs of excellent pedigree who hardly ever leave the place where the king is, guarding him. Round their necks they wear collars of gold and silver studded with a number of balls of the same metals. The audience is announced by the beating of a drum [that] they call *dubá,* made from a long hollow log. When the people [who] profess the same religion as the king approach him, they fall on their knees and sprinkle dust on their heads, for this is their way of greeting him. As for the Muslims, they greet him only by clapping their hands.

From Al-Bakri, writing in 1068 in *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West African History,* translated by J. F. P. Hopkins and edited and annotated by N. Levtzion and J. F. P. Hopkins (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2000), p. 80.

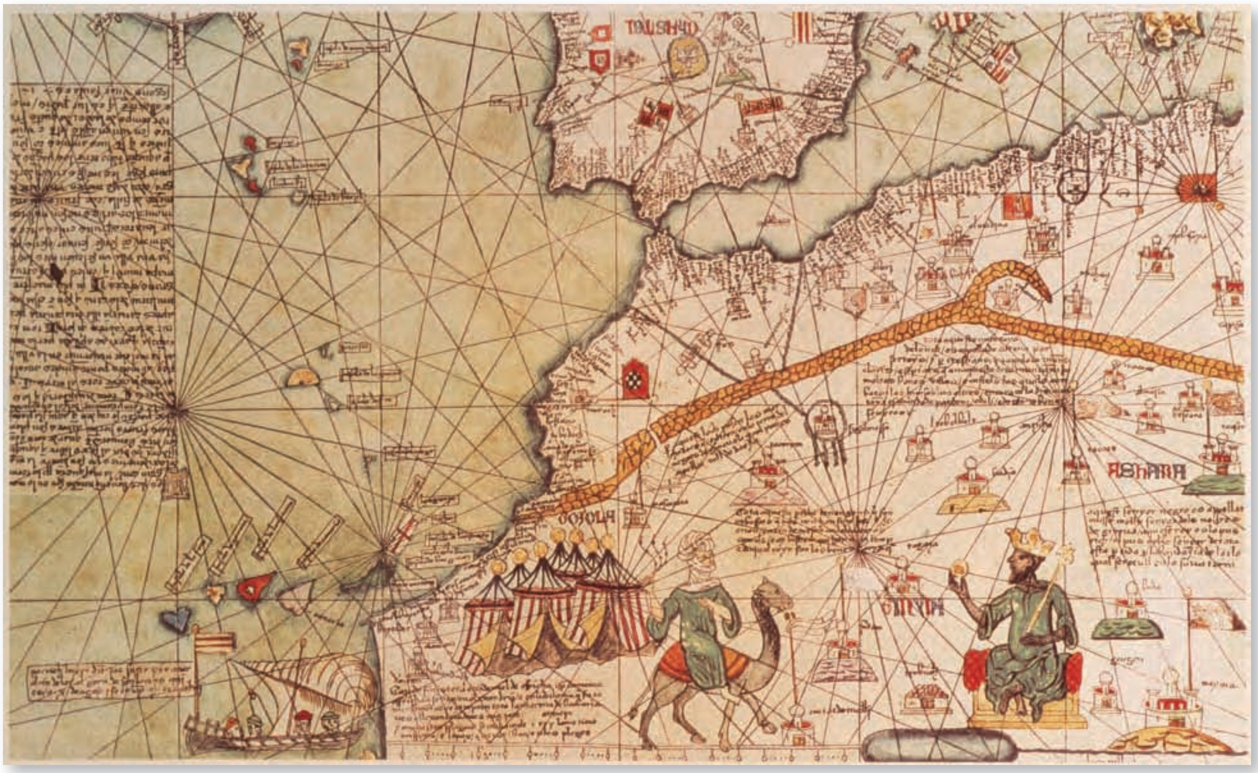
Mali's Rise

As Ghana declined, another kingdom—Mali, also called Melle—began to emerge as a power in 1235, although the nucleus of its political organization dates back to the beginning of the seventh century. Until the eleventh century, it was relatively insignificant, and its *mansas,* or kings, had little prestige or influence. The credit for consolidating and strengthening the kingdom of Mali goes to the legendary Sundiata Keita. It was Sundiata who led the Malinke people, a subject group of the Sosso, in a successful revolt in the early thirteenth century, thereby freeing his people and extending Mali's rule over the land once dominated by ancient Ghana. The victory gave Mali control of the internal routes—part of the trans-Saharan trade—that carried gold north to its eventual destination.

In the fourteenth century, a descendant of Sundiata, Mansa Musa, carried Mali to even greater heights. From 1312 to 1337 this remarkable member of the Keita dynasty ruled an empire comprising much of what is now francophone Africa. The people of Mali were predominantly agricultural, but a substantial number were engaged in various crafts and mining. The fabulously rich mines of Bure were now at their disposal and served to increase the royal coffers.

Mansa Musa's Pilgrimage

Mansa Musa, an ardent and pious convert to Islam, made a famous and spectacular pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324. He first visited various parts of his kingdom to show his subjects and vassals his tremendous wealth and to demonstrate his benevolence. He then proceeded to Tuat in the land of the Berbers and from there crossed the desert, visited Cairo, and finally went to the holy places of Mecca



Mansa Musa portrait on fourteenth-century Catalan atlas

Mansa Musa, who ruled the West African Empire of Mali from 1312 to 1337, is portrayed at the bottom center of this portion of the fourteenth-century Catalan Atlas. Mansa Musa's crown, scepter, throne, and the huge gold nugget he displays symbolize his power and wealth.

and Medina, all along the way displaying his kingdom's wealth and power to the Muslim world. Cairo's El Omari described the historic pilgrimage as composed of an entourage of thousands of people, a large portion of which constituted a military escort. Gifts were lavished on the populace, and mosques were built where they were needed.

By the time his camels approached Mecca, their burden had become considerably lighter than it had been when they departed for the East. It was said that he gave away such large amounts of gold that he caused its devaluation in Egypt. He returned by way of Ghadames, in Tripoli, where he received many honors and from which point he was accompanied to his kingdom by El-Momar, a descendant of the founder of the dynasty of the Almohads. A more significant visitor to return with Mansa Musa was Abu-Ishak Ibrahim-es-Saheli, a distinguished Arab poet and architect from a Granada family, whom Mansa Musa engaged to supervise the building of elaborate mosques at Timbuktu, Jenne, Gao, and elsewhere.

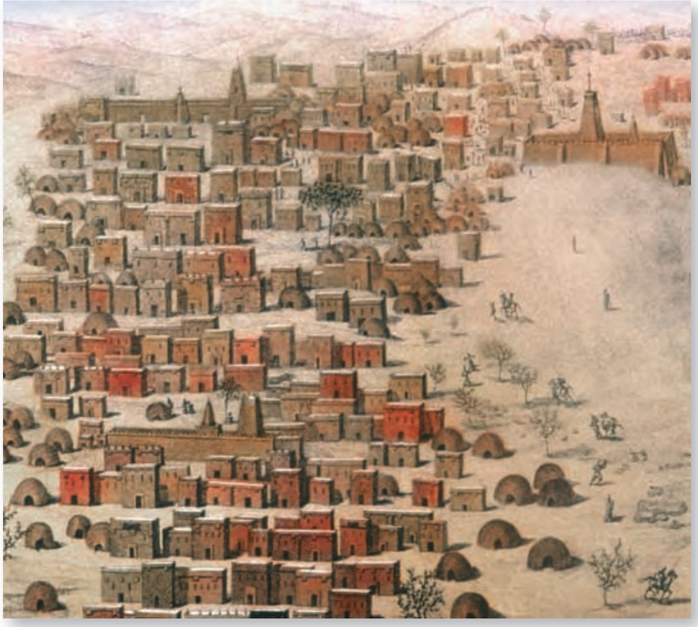
Mansa Musa's fame spread from North Africa to Europe. At the time of his death in 1337, Mali could boast of a powerful and well-organized political state. Traveling in the area a few years later, the Arab geographer Ibn Battuta reported being greatly impressed by "the discipline of its officials and provincial governors, the excellent condition of public finance, and the luxury and the rigorous and complicated ceremonial of the royal receptions, and the respect accorded to the decisions of justice and to the authority of the sovereign."

In the middle of the fourteenth century, Europe was just beginning to feel the effects of its commercial revolution, and European states had not yet achieved anything resembling national unity; but Mali under Mansa Musa and his successor Suleiman enjoyed a flourishing economy with good international trade relations and a government that extended several hundred miles from the Atlantic to Lake Chad. With Suleiman's death, however, a civil war followed, and by the beginning of the fifteenth century, Mali began to lose most of its important provinces and showed signs of disintegration in the face of attacks from the Songhay and the Mossi states. Bereft of its former glory, Mali continued to exist for many years as a small, semi-independent state.

The kingdom of Songhay emerged triumphant after the decline of Mali. Its roots go back to the Sorko people (a proto-Songhay group) living in the Gao region in the Niger River bend in the late seventh century. The region itself, however, shows earlier pre-Sorko settlement patterns as early as the Late Stone Age. In 1993 an archaeological excavation, which unearthed pottery, copper, beads, hippopotamus tusks, and funerary objects dating from the ninth through the twelfth centuries, confirmed the existence of two towns that were first noted by Arab chroniclers al-Muhallabi (in the tenth century) and al-Bakri (in the eleventh century).

The Rise of Songhay

According to scholar Timothy Insoll, the archaeological findings reveal that the entire Gao region was an important terminus of trade with both the surrounding hinterland and the trans-Sahara between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries. This region was composed of two settlements—the royal city of Old Gao, which was inhabited by the Sorko and thus indigenous Africans, and the commercial city of Gao-Saney, with its more diverse population of indigenous Africans, probably the Sorko, and Arabs. Funerary remains indicate that Islam was practiced at both sites in the early twelfth century, having been introduced through trade.



View of the city of Timbuktu

When Sonni Ali began his rule of the Songhay, most of West Africa was ripe for conquest. Mali was declining, and the lesser states, though ambitious, had neither the leadership nor the resources necessary to achieve dominance. The hour of the Songhay had arrived. Sonni Ali conceived of a plan to conquer the entire Niger region by building a river navy. In 1469 he conquered the important town of Timbuktu; in 1473 he captured Jenne, and afterward he moved on to other towns. Sonni Ali had used the riverine system to his advantage, deploying his military forces on the Niger itself. They navigated the great river's waters in the conquest of the lands on both sides. Under Sonni Ali, Songhay had catapulted into a position of primacy in West Africa.

Askia Muhammad's Reforms

During the reign of Askia Muhammad, from 1493 to 1529, the Songhay empire removed any doubt of its dominance in the Sahel. Askia Muhammad devoted his energies to solidifying his empire, making his people prosperous and encouraging learning. He built a professional army of slaves and prisoners of war and left his subjects to engage in farming and commerce. Local rulers, four viceroys, and Askia's brother Omar, as chief lieutenant, maintained peace and administered the empire. In 1494 Omar and the army conquered all of Massina. In subsequent years, most of Mali, the Hausa, and many other West African kingdoms fell before the power of the Songhay. Finally, the Songhay empire extended from the Atlantic to Bornu and from the Berber country in the north to the Mossi and Benin states in the south. It was by far the largest and most powerful state in the history of West Africa.

When Askia Muhammad, a Muslim, made his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1497, he doubtless believed that the journey would prove profitable in many ways. His retinue was composed primarily of scholars and officers of state, with a military escort numbering 1,500 men. He and his followers conversed with doctors, mathematicians, scientists, and scholars, and they learned much about how to improve the administration of the government, how to codify the laws of Songhay, how to foster industry and trade, and how to raise the intellectual level of the country. Even Askia Muhammad's investiture as caliph of the Sudan can be interpreted as a move to strengthen his country. Upon his return, Askia Muhammad instituted many reforms. He assigned carefully chosen governors, called *fari,* to rule over subdivisions of the empire. He reorganized the army and appointed chiefs, or *noi,* to administer provinces and large cities. Islamic law and the Koran served as the basis for administering justice. In the area of economic life, banking and credit were improved. A uniform system of weights and measures was established, and scales were inspected. The people of Songhay were encouraged to trade with other countries. Traders from Europe and Asia visited the markets of Gao, which was the political center of Songhay and home of its royal dynasty, and Timbuktu, which was an important place of learning.

It was in education that Askia Muhammad made his most significant reforms. Not only Timbuktu but also Gao, Walata, and Jenne became intellectual centers where the most learned scholars of West Africa concentrated. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a distinctly Sudanese literature was emerging. Timbuktu's University of Sankore offered studies in grammar, geography, law, literature, and surgery. In 1512 Leo Africanus—a Muslim convert to Christianity whose travel accounts for a long time were Europeans' chief source of information about Africa and Islam—paid homage to this intellectual climate: "Here (in Timbuktu) there are great stores of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges. And hither are brought divers manuscripts or written books out of Barbary, which are sold for more money than any other merchandise."

The great power of Songhay was not to last. Askia Muhammad was dethroned by his oldest son, and civil wars, massacres, and unsuccessful military expeditions followed. Although there were brief periods of revival, the empire was definitely declining. The Moors viewed the Sudan covetously and began to push across the desert. With Spanish renegades as their allies, Moroccans overthrew the Songhay state and began their own brief rule in Timbuktu.

Dichotomy of Sovereignty

The rulers of empires often clashed with the leaders of the states under their control—with local authorities who resisted their mandates or acted on the basis of their own imperial ambitions. This division between central and local authority—a dichotomy of sovereignty—kept the great kings sensitive to the possibility of conflict within their realms. For example, during his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324, Mansa-Musa, the ruler of Mali, shared the story of his difficulty in enforcing Islamic beliefs and practices in the states under his dominion. Devout as he may have been, Mansa-Musa extended greater tolerance toward the local authorities of the gold-bearing regions, since gold production seemed to diminish whenever he attempted to impose his religion. In exchange for a more profitable gold trade, Mansa-Musa agreed to respect indigenous religious customs. Few powerful kings of great empires and kingdoms ever achieved enough power to destroy completely the belief by local rulers that they themselves enjoyed a degree of sovereignty.

Other States

At the time of European exploration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, village-states flourished throughout Africa. Such states, individually no larger than 1,500 square kilometers, together accounted for most of the land area and population in Atlantic Africa, eapecially—between the Gambia River and the Niger Delta. Small in territorial size, mini-states closer to the coast were more densely populated than those inland. Some small states, however, did merge, voluntarily or by force, to form small kingdoms. These kingdoms, under favorable circumstances—for example, if they had able leadership, adequate resources, and strong military organization—could grow into federations or even empires.

The Mossi States

In West Africa the densely populated Mossi states, founded in the eleventh century, were located south of the bend of the Niger River. For a time, five states constituted the loose Mossi confederation. The governors of the five states composed the council of state and served as the chief ministers in the imperial organization. The ministers oversaw such departments as the army and finance, and beneath them a hierarchy of officials extended down to local functionaries. Cohesion was greatest in time of emergency, and the Mossi managed to repel the attacks of Mali and Songhay and remain more or less independent until succumbing to European (in this case, French) colonial rule in Africa in the nineteenth century.

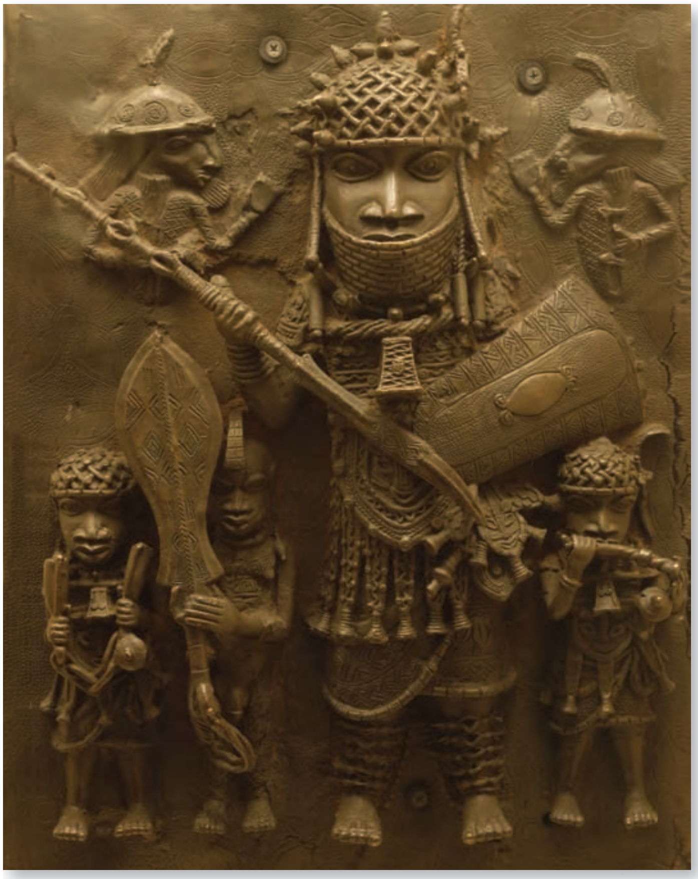
The strength of the Mossi states lay in their efficient political and military system. The emperor was absolute. His subordinates operated with carefully elaborated duties. Each morning the emperor received his ministers of state, who reported on the affairs of the realm. In the evening, the ruler dealt with matters concerning public order and criminal justice. The procedures of hearings and decisions bore a striking resemblance to trial by jury. There was no standing army, but the political and social system was so organized as to make it possible, on the briefest notice, to call up for military service every able-bodied man. The survival of the Mossi states in an area dominated by powerful empires such as Mali and Songhay testifies to their efficiency and wise leadership.

The Hausa States

The Hausa city-states grew from trade relations with other African states and with North Africans across the Sahara. The best known of the Hausa city-states are Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zaria, which grew also from their military conquest of agricultural villages to the south. Hausaland, expanding beyond its original towns and incorporating farming areas that grew millet, rice, pepper, and livestock, attained prominence in the middle fifteenth century under Islamic rulers such as Muhammad Rumfa of Kano (c. 1463–1499) and the legendary Queen Amina of Zaria (late fifteenth century or sixteenth century). The Hausa occupied roughly the area of present-day northern Nigeria. Each city retained its identity, with Kano in the limelight for a while, then Katsina, and later others. Kano, a walled city at the end of the fourteenth century, engaged in the trans-Saharan trade and also traded with the Kororofa people of the Benue river valley to the southeast. Horses, which abounded in and around Kano, were traded for slaves. Kano also became a center of learning, famous for its studies in law and theology. Although Islamic influence was dominant at the state level, priest-chiefs and their indigenous religious beliefs continued to hold sway among the masses of the population. Not until the beginning of the nineteenth century did Islam make noticeable inroads into the larger Hausa population.

The Kingdom of Benin

The kingdom of Benin extended westward, eventually gaining control of the Lagos area by deploying its fleet of war canoes on the inland lagoon routes. Known for its bronze and copper artistry, Benin wielded substantial military might, beginning in the sixteenth century, until in the eighteenth century its dominance was broken by the kingdoms of Dahomey and Oyo. During their heyday, Benin's kings controlled the use of copper in all forms, so that the metal was primarily employed to adorn the king's palace and to embellish royal regalia.


Plaque—Edo peoples, Benin kingdom, Nigeria, mid-sixteenth–mid-seventeenth century

Art played an important role in visually enhancing royal authority and power, often in the form of commemorative images cast from copper alloy. A guild of casters created images that memorialized a king's victory over a powerful opponent or the wealth and power of the royal court through its figurative representation of trade relations. For example, the copper alloy plaque shown here features a majestic warrior, possibly the *oba* (king) himself, accompanied by musicians, a page, and a number of smaller figures that represent the Portuguese trading partners with Benin at the time. Dutch observers in the early seventeenth century described plaques such as the one shown here—"cast copper . . . pictures of their war exploits and battles"—as lining the galleries of Benin's royal palace.

Royal commemorative heads were included in ancestral altars in Benin. Art historian Suzanne Blier has described how the physical head itself was imbued with symbolism and perceived as the site of important qualities connected to royal authority, such as royal destiny, wisdom, intelligence, noble character, sound judgment, and strong leadership. These artistic renderings reveal Benin's veneration of both male and female authority. The office of queen mother, believed to have been established in the early sixteenth century by King Esigie in honor of his mother, Idia, was a highly esteemed position in the kingdom of Benin. In the sixteenth century, brass heads personifying queen mothers were placed on special altars and displayed both at the primary palace and the queen mother's own home.

Although in Benin the accession of a king had to be validated by two nobles whom he could summarily dismiss afterward, in other African states kings were elected by officials, even though the king's family or hereditary claims were also honored. Indeed, when Europeans first encountered African rulers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they noted existing practices of election in such states as Biguba (on the coast of modern Guinea-Bissau), in Sierra Leone, and in regions around Accra on the Gold Coast (modern Ghana). The right of "election," whether actual or merely ceremonial, as well as the power to check rulers, were granted to representatives of specific lineages, often those considered related to the original settlers of the land.

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Commemorative trophy head of the Queen Mother—Benin kingdom, Nigeria, late fifteenth, early sixteenth century

The Christian Kongo

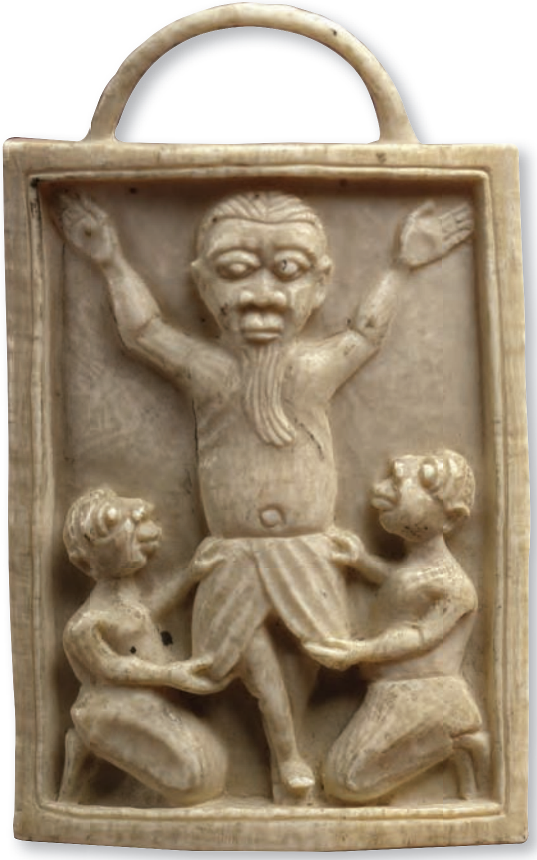
The kingdom of Kongo in West Central Africa was founded in the fourteenth century. It was unique for its voluntary conversion to Catholicism, which occurred after the Kongolese king Nzinga a Nkuwu asked Portuguese priests to baptize him in 1491. He adopted his baptismal name João I and established trade and religious relations with Portugal, allowing Portuguese merchants and priests into his kingdom. However, in Kongo, Africans and not the Portuguese controlled the church, and thus Catholic worship melded indigenous religious beliefs and practices with Christianity.

Christian beliefs, introduced by the Portuguese, complemented and reinforced local Kongo traditions, such as the cruciform (cross), which already existed as an indigenous symbol and powerful transitional space for communication between the earthly and the divine. Kongo leaders used Christian symbols like the crucifix as vehicles for communicating with deities and ancestors. Merging the secular and the spiritual, crucifixes were used to invoke divine favor in matters such as weather, hunting, and fertility, and played a significant role in legal proceedings and rain-making rituals.

After King João's death in 1506, his son Afonso ruled from 1509 to1543. He consolidated the power of the church in the kingdom of Kongo, beginning with the defeat of his brother—a non-Christian—who fought him for succession to the throne. Afonso's rule marked a rapid increase in the amount of trade with Portugal—trade that became increasingly involved in the export of slaves. Kongo reached its zenith in the mid-seventeenth century, and although it endured civil war and lost some of its centralization, it did not lose territory to the Portuguese.

Ndongo-Matamba

Another West Central African kingdom was Ndongo-Matamba, in what is now Angola. A decentralized state at the time of European contact in the 1560s, it (like many other African states during the Atlantic slave-trade era) became more centralized in the later decades of the sixteenth century. However, in the early years before the Portuguese initiated slave-trading relations, the king of Ndongo did not enjoy hereditary succession; instead, he was elected and held partially in check by the local authorities from Ndongo's constituent territories.



Crucifixion plaque—Kongo, Democratic Republic of Congo, collected 1874

The crucifixion plaque shown here, carved from ivory, represents a synthesis of Christian beliefs and values indigenous to the Kingdom of Kongo. The central Jesus figure is sculpted in the image of a Kongo man. The linear hair pattern was characteristic of Kongo traditions, and the beard connotes wisdom, status, and the authority of age in Kongo culture. The figures, kneeling in deference to Jesus and gripping his garment, suggest the Kongo tradition of kneeling when entering or leaving the home of a distinguished person.

The legitimacy of rulers appears to have become a more contentious issue once the Portuguese introduced the slave trade, and Portugal often allied with one African faction over another, exacerbating struggles over sovereignty. Such crises became particularly intense in the 1600s and, interestingly, involved an African woman ruler. Queen Njinga, born in 1582, was one of the first female rulers of Ndongo. She spent much of her reign, from 1624 until her death in 1663, justifying her claim to the throne and fighting off Portuguese encroachments on her land. Njinga, a convert to Catholicism, like the rulers of neighboring Kongo, seized power after her brother's death left only his 8-year old son as heir to the kingship. Supported by royal or court slaves, Njinga countered military slaves initially under her rival Hari a Kiluanji, one of Ndongo's local territorial authorities. Leading her troops into battle, Njinga fought to retain her power over a more centralized state. Her alliance with the Portuguese collapsed when they supported her enemies, and in response Njinga abandoned Christianity and led her troops (which included a battalion of women) against the Portuguese during the late 1620s. The protracted struggle ended in a stalemate.

Great Zimbabwe

As early as 1000 C.E., East Africa was firmly incorporated into a larger international arena surrounding the Indian Ocean. The region had an abundance of coastal city-states along the Swahili Coast, stretching from modern Somalia to Mozambique, whose wealth and sophistication attested to their connections with both the continental interior and the outside world. The implications of this interaction can be seen far inland, with the emergence between 1100 and 1450 of the powerful state of Great Zimbabwe. Located in the South African Limpopo River basin, Great Zimbabwe benefited from its control of local gold resources, ivory, and cattle-raising. It is most famous for its large stone walls, stone towers, and an elliptical building whose architectural wonder was once attributed to the ancient Phoenicians rather than to indigenous African peoples. Yet archaeological excavations reveal Great Zimbabwe's African, and specifically proto-Shona and Shona, origins. Great Zimbabwe, as well as its precursor Mapungubwe (1000–1200 C.E.) and other smaller states between the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, have been linked to the Swahili coastal trade. The excavation of graves dating back to the fifteenth century has unearthed the remains of these societies' rulers and their adornments: gold jewelry, woven cloth of local African provenance, and imported glass beads, the last item indicating trade with the coastal areas along the Indian Ocean.

The Swahili Coast

For centuries, the Swahili Coast was peopled by African, Arab, Persian, and Indian traders. As Islam spread through East Africa beginning in the eighth century and accelerating from about the eleventh century onward, the Swahili Coast city-states blended African and Arab ways. The Swahili language is a Bantu language in terms of structure with some words borrowed from Arabic and other languages as dictated by commerce and religion. At its height from 1000–1500 C.E., the Swahili Coast had such flourishing seaside towns as Mogadishu, Malindi, and Kilwa. In 1498, Vasco De Gama explored East Africa, and more Portuguese explorers followed in the sixteenth century, leaving accounts of a sea-oriented trade already in place in Mombasa and Malindi. Historian Patrick Manning has shown that slavery in East Africa in the late eighteenth century, especially in Mozambique, led to the expansion of the slave trade, first to the Middle East and then to the Americas. Slaves were exported from Mozambique well into the nineteenth century because of the weak policing of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, as opposed to efforts to suppress slave trading on the Atlantic.

The states described in this chapter represent only a sample of the many African political units. Some, like Egypt, Kush, and Carthage, flourished in ancient times, before the Common Era. Others came later. Some areas, such as present-day Zimbabwe and the savannah lands south of the Congo Basin, witnessed different civilizations rising on the sites of their predecessors. While Europeans were fighting in the Crusades, Muslim Swahili-speaking city-states along the Indian Ocean were trading with Arabia, India, and the East Indies (modern Indonesia). Ethiopians have a recorded history that goes back almost two thousand years. Other kingdoms are of more recent origin: the Zulu people of Southern Africa, for instance, did not form a powerful nation until the nineteenth century. To a greater or lesser degree, however, all had some connection with the African-descended peoples of the New World.

CHAPTER

16

The Arts at Home and Abroad

Recorded Music and Radio

Jazz Roots and Routes

Motion Pictures

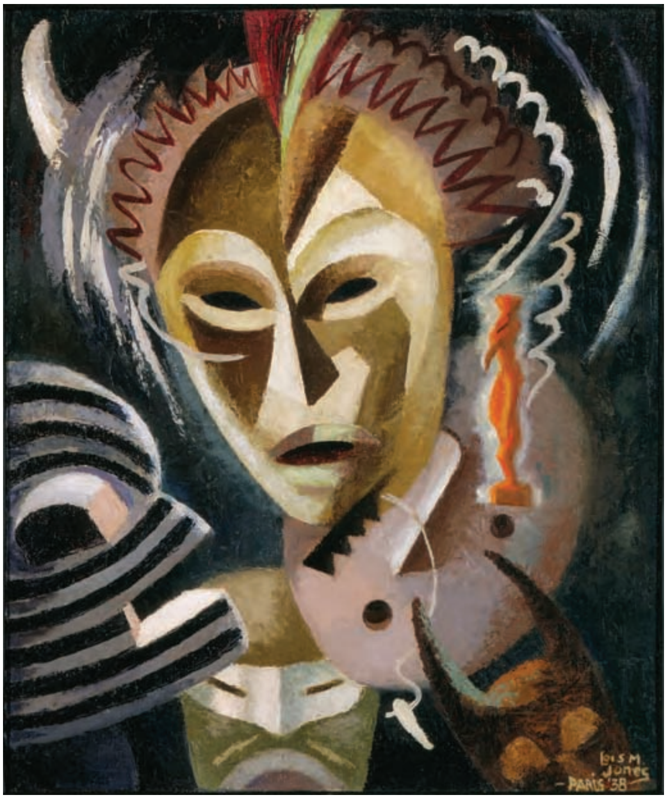
Black Theater

The Harlem Renaissance

French Connections

Visual Artists

Clashing Artistic Values



***Les Fetiches*, Lois Mailou Jones, 1938**
This largely abstract painting incorporates a motif of African masks.

The 1920s witnessed an unprecedented spread of black artistic expression. This cultural diffusion was made possible by the fortuitous confluence of electronic innovation (the radio and phonograph), corporate publishing, and mass advertising and distribution networks that targeted newly identified intraracial and interracial consumer markets.

In the 1920s corporate America acknowledged and began systematically to cater to the black consumer. The popularity and profitability of black creativity did not escape the attention of the white-dominated entertainment industry, wealthy white art patrons, and publishers and literary agents. The renaissance of black musicians, writers, filmmakers, painters, and sculptors captivated black as well as white audiences with its vibrant, colorful appeal. As black cultural production flourished in the United States and abroad, some artists deemed themselves "New Negroes" with little need to "prove" their talents to whites or justify their very presence in the artistic arena. It was precisely in the arts, argued the New Negroes in Harlem, that the possibility existed for blacks to participate as equals to whites.

For the artistic New Negro, the Roaring Twenties proved to be an exciting time. The Jazz Age was also the maturing decade of American modernism—a cultural movement that spanned the years 1910–1950, during which the arts shifted away from realism and tradition and toward the abstract, the nonlinear, and the experimental. Modernist works often integrated and appropriated African art forms, which whites perceived as conveying a more uninhibited, free, and dynamic expression. White writers and artists themselves grew increasingly interested in a non-Western aesthetic—especially with African and African American subject matter, whose "exoticism," and sensuality conformed to racially charged notions of "the primitive" and constituted a crucial part of modernism's desire to extricate artistic creativity from what were condemned as stifling old Victorian conventions. For their own purposes, black artists, too, adopted the "primitive," manipulating it in word, dance, jazz, and the visual arts.

In this fluid and innovative cultural world, African American artists thought they saw an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the black image in the larger public mind, and they sought to win respect for themselves and for blacks as a group through their contributions in the cultural realm. Some even outlined an agenda for artists in the struggle for racial equality. But not all blacks engaged in the arts considered their role to be crusaders for racial justice; instead they sought merely to express their creative talents in an unfettered way. They produced poems, novels, films, and songs merely for the sake of art or for escape into an inner world without racial distinctions. Nor did all blacks agree on the reach of artistic license. The more traditional thinkers frowned on efforts to capture the full measure of the black experience, particularly the undignified realities. Black artists and their followers debated publicly the nature and the role of the arts in the struggle for racial equality. Ultimately, the works and the lives of black artists reflected the search for answers to two profoundly important questions: Is a black artist's highest responsibility to the work of art or to the progress of black people? And can the two be reconciled?

Recorded Music and Radio

In August 1920, black vaudeville singer Mamie Smith sparked a momentous trend in American culture when she recorded black songwriter Perry Bradford's "Crazy Blues" on the Okeh Records label. It is to Bradford's credit that Smith became the first black woman to release a blues record for a major company. White companies had not looked to black women for talent, judging their voices and diction unsuitable. Cognizant of the ever-swelling but still untapped urban black consumer market, Bradford insisted that "14 million Negroes in our great country . . . will buy records if recorded by one of their own." His message eventually persuaded Okeh executive Fred Hager to take the risk, and his corporate gamble paid off handsomely. In the first month of its release, Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" sold 75,000 copies in Harlem alone. Within seven months, the record reached phenomenal sales in black communities all over the nation—facilitated by entrepreneurial black Pullman porters who bought copies of the record in northern cities for a dollar each and resold them at higher prices as the train headed south.

Classic Blues

Smith's instant popularity opened the doors of the major recording studios for other black women—most notably Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, Alberta Hunter, Trixie Smith, Victoria Spivey, Clara Smith, Ida Cox, Sippie Wallace, Alberta Hunter, and Ethel Waters in her early years. This cohort of black women singers, who toured the vaudeville circuit (called the "chitlin" circuit), are best known for launching what music scholars term the "classic blues"—a female style of sassy, urban-sounding blues songs. The classic blues women were backed by instrumentalists and recorded for what white executives called the "race records" market.

Within three years of Mamie Smith's record debut, the blues had become a smashing success. Bessie Smith (no relation to Mamie) was the most popular of the classic blues singers during the 1920s. Her debut release in 1923, "Down Hearted Blues," reputedly sold more than 750,000 records within a year. In Chicago's black neighborhoods, lines of eager consumers waited outside record stores to buy her latest releases. Far from the urban North—in West Virginia coal-mining towns to New Orleans—passersby heard the voices of classic blues singers from open home windows. Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson noted the pervasive presence of blues records during her childhood in New Orleans: "Everybody was buying phonographs . . . and everybody had records of all the Negro blues singers—Bessie Smith . . . Ma Rainey . . . Mamie Smith . . . all the rest. . . . You couldn't help but hear blues—all through the thin partitions of the houses—through the open windows—up and down the street in the colored neighborhoods—everybody played it real loud."

Sales of the classic blues records generated tremendous competition for the "race records" market. Five years after the debut of Mamie Smith, Paramount Records heeded a suggestion to record a Texas bluesman named Blind Lemon Jefferson, who was brought to the label's Chicago studios in 1925. Jefferson's was the first solo recording by a male blues singer, and the tremendous success of his first recordings in 1926 resulted in a new genre—male-dominated country blues. Unlike the "classic blues" artists, the rural bluesmen played their own instruments, usually the guitar and harmonica. The country blues reaped huge profits for white companies—Okeh, Columbia, Gennett, Paramount, and Victor Records—all of which searched breathlessly for new talent on the street corners and in the juke joints of the Deep South.

Race records of rural bluesmen in the 1920s included those of Blind Blake from Jacksonville, Florida, and Charley Patton and Son House from Mississippi. In the 1930s the songs of Mississippi bluesman Robert Johnson would be added to the record list. For the sake of cultural "authenticity," the recording engineers permitted the rural bluesmen full control over the presentation of their distinctive regional sound and musical repertoire.

In the 1920s the black consumer became a significant economic factor in the production and marketing of black culture. Presuming to cater to the race market, however, begged the

Bessie Smith, blues singer
A protégé of Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Smith sang, danced, and played comic sketches. Her most successful career was in her recordings, some of which sold 100,000 within one week.

Black Swan Records

questions of how to define and market to black cultural tastes and of who was to do the defining and the marketing. As black entrepreneurs sought to capture this market's burgeoning profits, they quickly realized how difficult it would be to retain black control. This was certainly true of the music business. In 1920 black publisher and businessman Harry Pace decided to create Black Swan Records as a company for the production of a broad range of black musical forms—spirituals, opera, and other classical music, in addition to blues and ragtime. Pace envisioned Black Swan as not merely a business but also a vehicle for racial advancement. Through its range of musical offerings, Pace argued, Black Swan refuted minstrelsy and other racist images of black culture, and through its business model it brought capital and middle-class respectability to the black community. Historian David Suisman observes that Pace's goals complemented the cultural agenda of those writers and literary critics of the Harlem Renaissance, who similarly sought to utilize the arts in the struggle for racial equality and justice.

Pace's civil rights interests probably began while he was a student at Atlanta University, from which he graduated in 1903. W. E. B. Du Bois was on the faculty of the university at this time. In 1905 Du Bois invited Pace to be the business manager of the Niagara Movement organ, *Moon Illustrated Weekly.* After the founding of the NAACP, Pace became president of the Atlanta chapter and personally hired young Walter White, who would later lead the national organization. It was Du Bois, according to David Suisman, who suggested the name of Pace's recording company, which recalled the nineteenth-century black concert singer Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, known during her career as the "Black Swan."

Economic considerations ultimately dictated Black Swan's repertoire of mostly popular music, rather than concert and opera. It was not that Pace was averse to the blues. Before coming to New York and establishing Black Swan Records, he had collaborated with W. C. Handy, known as the Father of the Blues. A business partnership with Handy, the Pace and Handy Music Company, brought Pace to New York to establish a business in sheet music. At all times, however, racial respectability and middle-class values were important to him. The blues vocalist Ethel Waters, whose first recordings were made for Black Swan in 1921, noted in her autobiography Pace's concerns in this regard. When she was first hired, as Waters recalled, she had lengthy discussions with Pace and pianist Fletcher Henderson (the business manager at Black Swan) as to "whether I should sing popular or 'cultural' numbers." Waters's recordings, such as "Down Home Blues" and "Oh Daddy," clearly positioned her within the emergent classic blues tradition, but Black Swan went out of its way to distance her art from what Pace considered the undignified marketing of such blueswomen as Bessie Smith. Black Swan refused Bessie Smith a record contract, although Columbia Records signed her soon afterward. Advertising in the *The Chicago Defender,* Black Swan boasted that Waters "changed the style of Blues singing overnight and brought a finer interpretation of this work. She dignified the blues."

To ensure maximum distribution of his product, Harry Pace sold Black Swan records in drugstores, furniture dealers, newsstands, barber shops, pool halls, and even speakeasies—any place that might conduct business with a heavily African American clientele. The label also sold records by mail order, and Pace attempted to diversify his product line by introducing Black Swan record-playing machines, marketing models emblematic of black racial pride. The Dunbar (Paul Laurence Dunbar) model of a Swanola phonograph and a L'Ouverture (Toussaint L'Ouverture) model were advertised in the NAACP's *The Crisis,* edited by Du Bois. Feeling the pinch of powerful white competitors, Black Swan Records advertised in *The Crisis* in December 1922 that "passing for Colored has become popular since we established Black Swan Records as the only genuine Colored Records, sung by Colored Artists and made by a Colored Company."

Ultimately Black Swan Records was defeated by the larger white industry's decision to exploit the black consumer audience. The massive sales of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" had cast the die. The very musicians deemed too earthy and "rough" for Black Swan's own catalog were signed on and recorded on the white record labels: Bessie Smith on Columbia, Jelly Roll Morton on Gennett, King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band on both Gennett and Okeh. A host of new labels rivaled Black Swan for the profitable jazz and blues market, forcing Pace to urge the black community to stay true to racial self-help by patronizing Black Swan—the only "genuine" black business. But the rival record companies, plus the radio, put Black Swan out of business after only two years in operation.

National and Live Broadcast Radio

The radio industry, having been effectively inaugurated during the 1920 Cox-Harding presidential election, introduced black talent over the national airwaves in a way that eroded the kind of cultural and social isolation defining the rural southern black world. The radio, particularly national broadcast networks, reached across time zones and regions, providing the highway on which black musicians traveled into homes across America. Throughout the 1920s, radio was a significant factor in the dissemination of black music—blues, jazz, gospel, and other forms. Black musicians could be heard on many local stations and, to a lesser extent, network broadcasts as they performed live in studios, or live for white audiences in nightclubs, hotels, and dance halls.

Telephone and telegram requests from fans flooded into the WMC station in Memphis when it aired Bessie Smith live from the city's Palace Theater on October 6, 1923, singing "Tain't Nobody's Bizness if I Do," "Beale Street Blues," and "Outside of That He's All Right With Me." Music historian William Randle, Jr., has identified eight hundred broadcasts of black musicians between 1921and 1930 in cities across the nation. The greatest opportunities for black radio listeners were in urban centers with large concentrations of black musical talent, including Los Angeles, New Orleans, Memphis, Dallas, Atlanta, Detroit, and (most prominently) Chicago and New York. Based on the existing documentation, Randle reveals a diversity of programming—performances of dance bands, opera, blues, and religious music. In the 1920s, at a time when African American music, particularly jazz and dance band music, were emerging as the nation's most popular musical trends, white listeners who might never have purchased recordings by blacks or attended a black music concert now had the luxury of hearing this music over the airwaves for free and through a medium in which the performer's racial identity was effectively masked. In a similar vein, African Americans, excluded from the upscale white entertainment venues, could nevertheless enjoy the music via radio.

In Chicago, several local stations carried blacks in performance in white establishments. Station WBBM, a significant source of live jazz broadcasting throughout the decade, presented Jimmy Wade's Moulin Rouge Orchestra as part of its broadcasting premier ceremony. Earl "Fatha" Hines and his orchestra broadcast from Hines's long-term base at the Grand Terrace Hotel, on station WEDC. Legendary black clarinetist Jimmie Noone, who was an important influence on the young white Chicagoan Benny Goodman, broadcast live from the Plantation Lounge on Chicago's WWAE. Blues masters Pine Top Smith and Albert Ammons (father of tenor saxophonist Gene Ammons) were also featured in live performances on Chicago radio stations. These local radio stations did not limit black performance fare to the popular secular music of the 1920s. As early as 1923 the Mundy Choristers, eighty voices strong and the best-known black choir in Chicago, were featured on special Sunday broadcasts with other black religious groups over station KYW. Recordings of black religious music, especially the gospel blues made famous by once-secular blues composer Thomas Dorsey, found fast-growing consumer and radio appeal initially in Chicago and soon the entire nation.

New York stations aired black musicians regularly. Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake were guests on at least three radio stations during 1923 and 1924 (WJZ, WHN, and WEAF), performing music from their Broadway hit *Shuffle Along.* Clarence Williams, an early jazz-recording figure, accompanied black singers live on station WJZ as early as 1922, and he also performed live in 1924 with his wife Eva Taylor, both of whom made memorable recordings during 1924 and 1925 in Clarence Williams's Blue Five, featuring jazz greats Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet. On April 8, 1925, a recital by the young singer Paul Robeson was carried live on local radio.

Duke Ellington in top hat

A famous photo showing an elegant Duke Ellington in top hat and tails

The big band broadcast tradition was tremendously popular in New York in the 1920s and remained so through the heady radio days of the Swing Era of the 1930s and 1940s. Black performances could be heard over the airways direct from white cabarets, nightclubs, and theaters. Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra broadcast live from the Club Alabam at least forty-seven times during 1924; it also broadcast live between 1924 and 1928 from the fashionable, whites-only Roseland Ballroom. Beginning in 1927, Chick Webb's Orchestra was broadcasting regularly from the Savoy Ballroom, from which emanated as many as eight broadcasts per week through 1930.

Certainly the greatest beneficiary of radio's live music policy in the 1920s, and the decade's most frequently broadcast black musician, was Duke Ellington. Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington (April 29, 1899–May 24, 1974) was renowned for his numerous jazz compositions. His career spanned over half a century, ultimately meriting him the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969 and France's Legion of Honor in 1973. Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Ellington began to play the piano in earnest after his high-school years—at which time he formed a band and eventually moved to New York. He became a national celebrity after his orchestra was heard via radio more than two hundred times between 1927 and 1931. Ellington's initial broadcasts were heard on the New York local station WHN, but his performances were soon picked up weekly and given a national audience by the CBS radio network.

Direct from Harlem's Cotton Club with its whites-only clientele, listeners of all races in America heard Ellington's "jungle music," described by musicologists as such because of its timbral twists, "primal" syncopations, and growling sounds from the horn section. Ellington's early music drew on an imagined exotic "primitive" notion of African Americans similar to that portrayed by black writers and visual artists in Harlem in the 1920s. The titles of Ellington's pieces during this period carried unmistakable racial meaning—"Black Beauty," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "East St. Louis Toodle-Oo," "The Mooche," and "Creole Love Call."

COTTON CLUB
UCKLEY
AUTY SALON
MANICURE
FROCKS

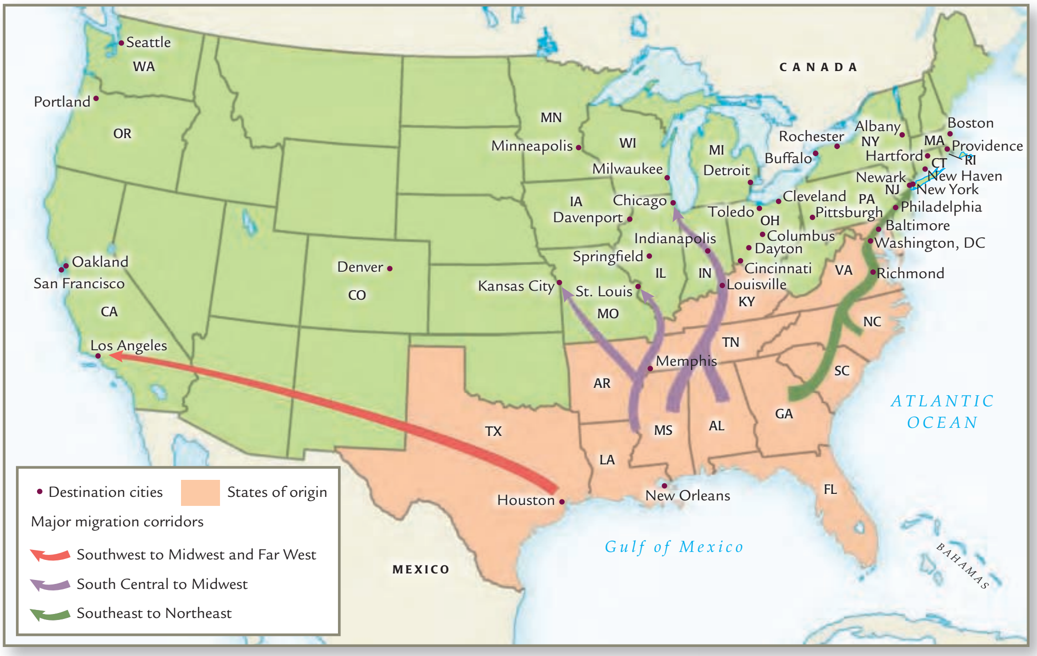
The Cotton Club in Harlem

The night spot that best invokes glittering images of Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s is the Cotton Club. White and well-heeled patrons enjoyed such African American entertainers as Louis Armstrong and Bill “Bojangles” Robinson at the elegant Cotton Club.

Jazz Roots and Routes

The decade of the “Roaring Twenties” is also called the “Jazz Age” in recognition of the preeminence of jazz as America’s most popular music. Its rhythmic buoyancy, improvisational content, and presumed unrestrained style appeared to define the very spirit of the times. Yet jazz was an extremely controversial art form in the 1920s—not without harsh critics among whites and blacks alike. Many middle-class blacks believed it to be a hindrance to racial progress, since jazz artists often presented it as a referent for sexuality, primal passions, and exotic “primitivism.”

In the early 1920s some observers had already begun to use the term *Jazz Age* in tribute to the numerous African American musicians whose compositions and performances made jazz so popular among Americans of all classes and races. Perhaps no one gave more substance and depth to the meaning of the *Jazz Age* than did Ferdinand “Jelly Roll” Morton, composer, pianist, and raconteur. By World War I, Morton had composed a number of works that won for him recognition as the first jazz composer.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Houston
New Orleans
FL
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Gulf of Mexico
MEXICO
BAHAMAS
Destination cities
States of origin
Major migration corridors
Southwest to Midwest and Far West
South Central to Midwest
Southeast to Northeast

The Great Blues Migration

In the two Great Migrations, millions of African Americans left the South for cities in the North and on the West Coast, spreading several styles of Blues music across the country.
Map by Michael Siegel, Rutgers Cartography, In Motion: The African American Migration Experience, *Schomburg Center Online Exhibition*

The Evolution of Jazz: New Orleans to Chicago

Jazz evolved from clearly demarcated regional differences in black music—shaped by the migration routes of southern musicians and their blues tradition, as well as by the rise of the northern record industry that encouraged jazz bands and black singers after Mamie Smith's success in 1920. Many early jazz greats (including Louis Armstrong, Fletcher Henderson, and James P. Johnson) began their careers, and later supplemented their income, by playing behind the classic blues singers in live performance and on records. Black migration routes figured significantly, since the development of jazz in the early 1920s reflects African American migration trends, specifically the northward migration route from Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi to the Midwest. It is no coincidence that the emergence of jazz in Chicago was transformed by the classic blues-based, improvisational music of New Orleans—the city identified as the birthplace of jazz.

More important, New Orleans' best musicians migrated to Chicago, where musical opportunities appeared as plentiful as the industrial opportunities that lured the many thousand others during the Great Migration. By 1918 a number of New Orleans musicians had become established in Chicago, and they in turn sought to bring other musicians out of the South to form new bands in Chicago's heavily black South Side. Indeed, Chicago's fast-growing black population assured a consumer base for the city's music industry, while black musicians promised excellent entertainment for nightclubs that catered to white patrons.

The New Orleans influence could be seen in the major jazz recordings by Chicago-based bands in the 1920s. The bands comprised five to seven musicians. The most important of the early New Orleans-to-Chicago bands was the acclaimed King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, which recorded for several white companies—Gennett, Columbia, and Okeh Records. Joseph "King" Oliver, a virtuoso cornetist in New Orleans, had been Morton's contemporary. Oliver's Chicago band represented the New Orleans ensemble style—typically small, combo jazz featuring solo improvisations. In the Oliver band, the roles of trumpet(s), trombone, and clarinet were strictly defined, in terms set in turn-of-the-century New Orleans. Moreover, Oliver's Creole Jazz Band was assembled between 1918 and 1922 and composed almost entirely of New Orleans-to-Chicago migrants—Oliver (trumpet), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Baby Dodds (drums), Bill Johnson (bass and guitar), and Honore Dutrey (trombone); only pianist Lillian Hardin did not come from New Orleans. Only one New Orleanian subsequently joined the band, when within months of his opening at the Lincoln Gardens Oliver decided to add to the group a second cornet—a young man named Louis Armstrong, whom Oliver had known as a child. Armstrong arrived by train in August 1922. Armstrong's migration out of the South had a transformative effect on the development of jazz in the early 1920s.

Jazz in New York: Ragtime to Stride

New York had its own small band tradition, as evidenced in the "Stride" piano style, a pioneering and influential jazz form that evolved from ragtime. The solo piano "cutting contests" and the masters of this musical style—James P. Johnson (considered the father of Stride), Thomas "Fats" Waller, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and Lucky Roberts—were heard in Harlem clubs, rent parties, vaudeville, musical theater, and on records. However, unlike Chicago, it was the big-band tradition that represented the more prominent New York jazz scene in the early 1920s. New York jazz grew out of an earlier music form, typified not so much by the blues but by the large band music of James Reese Europe, which began around 1910 (and thus prior to his illustrious role with the 369th Infantry during World War I).

If New York did not have a blues tradition to speak of, it did indeed have its own jazz tradition. According to musicologist R. Reid Badger, "between 1908 and 1919 certain subtle modifications of popular ragtime-based rhythms and tonality along with an increasing acceptance of extemporization, gained such wide-spread recognition that by 1919 it was common in the United States and Europe to speak of the existence of a new music—jazz."

The James Reese Europe Orchestra

Bandleader James Reese Europe was a key figure in this evolution through his role in New York's black musical theater in the first decade of the twentieth century and his prewar leadership of the Clef Club. Organized in 1910, the Clef Club was a fraternal and professional organization of black musicians and composers, organized with the aim of bettering their working conditions, income, and opportunities. It also functioned as a booking agency for its members. The Clef Club addressed the same kind of issues for blacks that the segregated New York American Federation of Musicians addressed for whites. Europe's stated ambition was to create "an orchestra of Negroes which will be able to take its place among the serious musical organizations of the country." The Clef Club held major concerts each spring and fall, featuring its Clef Club Symphony Orchestra. The most historic of those concerts were the performances—firsts for black orchestras—at Carnegie Hall between 1912 and 1914.

Because of James Reese Europe's connection to dance idols Vernon and Irene Castle (Europe was their musical director and the conductor of their accompanying orchestra), Victor Records offered him a recording contract in 1913. The James Reese Europe Orchestra recordings revealed a unique sound of syncopation and drums, according to Reid Badger, giving a "looser or freer approach to tonal variations and interpretation by the performers."

R.E. MERCER
N.Y.

James Reese Europe's Society Orchestra c. 1914
Europe is at the piano on the right

Later in 1913, in an interview about the dance music field, Europe himself stated, "Our Negro orchestras have nearly cleared the field."

During World War I, James Europe and his Hellfighter's Band of the 369th infantry brought jazz to France, and upon his return home after the war, he received an exclusive recording contract with Pathé, a French recording company. The arrangement was announced as a contract to record the "Jazz King," whose popularity only heightened once Europe's army band toured cities throughout the United States in 1919. The musicians thrilled their audiences with "No Man's Land," a jazz performance that entailed darkening the concert hall and re-creating the sounds of the battlefield. Impressed by the band's performance in Chicago in May 1919, *The Chicago Defender* explicitly linked the arts to the battle against racism.

The jazz aesthetic in New York differed from Chicago jazz not only in its big-band tradition, which emerged from the contexts of Broadway and the society dance, but also in its tight, intricate orchestrations with only modest amounts of improvisation. Musicologists, looking for the roots of big-band jazz, have attached specific importance to the Europe band's recordings in 1919 of two W. C. Handy tunes, "St. Louis Blues" and "Memphis Blues," as indicative of Europe's shift away from ragtime to a blues-inflected jazz.

Window in Time

"Jazzing Away Prejudice"

WE HOPE THE SWING of Europe [James Reece Europe] and his band around the country will be nationwide. The most prejudiced enemy of our Race could not sit through an evening with Europe [James Reece Europe] without coming away with a changed viewpoint. For he is compelled in spite of himself to see us in a new light. . . . It is a well-known fact that the white people view us largely from the standpoint of the cook, porter, and waiter, and his limited opportunities are responsible for much of the distorted opinion concerning us. Europe and his band are worth much more to our Race than a thousand speeches from so-called Race orators and uplifters. . . . EUROPE AND HIS BAND are demonstrating what our people can do in a field where the results are bound to be of the greatest benefit. He has the white man's ear because he is giving the white man something new. He is meeting a popular demand in catering to this love of syncopated music he is jazzing away the barriers of prejudice.

Source: "Jazzing Away Prejudice," *Chicago Defender,* May 10, 1919.

With Europe's tragic death at the hands of a fellow band member while on tour in Boston in May 1919 (ironically within days of his Chicago appearance), pianist and orchestra leader Fletcher Henderson emerged as his successor. Like Europe, Henderson emphasized professionalism on the part of his musicians, since his orchestra was often booked to play in the prestigious white Times Square area. For Henderson, the black musician's professional image required discipline, proper appearance, and musical reading skill over improvisation. An Atlanta University graduate, and friend and business associate of Harry Pace of Black Swan Records, Fletcher Henderson was a race-conscious man, of whom trumpeter Howard Scott recalled: "Every night you had to . . . stand inspection. He'd look at your hair, your face, see if you shaved, your shoes, see if they're shined. You had to be perfect to suit him."

By 1925 music critics and the black press had discovered Henderson's orchestra and applauded its image of respectability. Under the title "Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra," the group attained such broad appeal that white record companies advertised it as part of their general series targeted to white consumers. Recording over one hundred sides in 1923 and 1924, however, the "lowdown" blues also formed part of Henderson's repertoire. In this case, Henderson made money from the "race records" market, playing as backup to the classic blues singers. In these advertisements, which appeared prominently in black newspapers, the name of Henderson's orchestra appears in small print and is far less conspicuous in relation to the names of prominently featured blues women such as Alberta Hunter, Gladys Bryant, and Ida Cox.

Louis Armstrong Transforms Big Band Jazz

In 1924, Louis Armstrong accepted Fletcher Henderson's offer to join his orchestra in New York. Armstrong brought extraordinary new talent to the orchestra, while enhancing his own skills. In working with Henderson at downtown Manhattan's Roseland Ballroom, he had joined the most sophisticated black orchestra in the country. Although a musical genius, Armstrong was not a strong reader of musical scores. Armstrong's development as a jazz artist had occurred in a format that was just the opposite of the Henderson band's requirement for an occasional soloist who played from written scores. Yet it was Armstrong who electrified the Roseland audience. One onlooker noted that "people stopped dancing to come around and listen to him. And they could hear him out on the street. . . . The next night you couldn't get into the place. Just that quick. It had gone all around about this new trumpet player at Roseland." Armstrong helped to transform New York's big-band jazz.

The New York experience transformed Armstrong in a number of ways. While in New York he connected with an old New Orleans colleague, Sidney Bechet, who had spent much of the early 1920s in Europe. In 1924, Bechet was the only jazz musician in America who rivaled Armstrong as a soloist. Critics have marveled at the sweeping operatic influences on Bechet's virtuosity, as they have similarly commented about Armstrong. Bechet claimed to have been influenced by the French opera he heard as a child in New Orleans. As a technician, he was Armstrong's peer. In a series of 1924–1925 recordings for Okeh and Gennett records, made under the direction of black jazz pianist Clarence Williams, Armstrong and Bechet challenged one another in virtuoso displays that were, in their own way, as musically historic as the pairings of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie twenty years later. The Bechet and Armstrong recordings had done something completely new. They started jazz on the road to the development of sequential solo improvisation, following the melody or theme. This gradually became the template for virtually all post-1920s combo jazz.

Armstrong returned to Chicago in 1925, but during his short time in New York, he had a catalytic impact on Henderson's musicians. Armstrong's arrival brought to the Henderson orchestra a new rhythmic momentum—a blues-infused sensibility and, equally important, a new spirit of improvisational boldness. Particularly affected were the band's young tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and the principal arranger Don Redman. Redman is traditionally credited with translating Armstrong's flexible rhythmic qualities into a big-band framework and with making big-band music "swing."

Louis
ARMSTRONG
Selmer

Louis Armstrong

Poster for a Chicago appearance by Louis Armstrong in the 1920s

On his return to Chicago in 1925, Armstrong set out to develop further the art of the jazz solo. He had refined his improvisational and technical skills in the Henderson orchestra and applied what he had learned to the new series of recordings that his wife Lillian Hardin had arranged. In Chicago, he also became the leader of his own combo, the Hot Fives (later, the Hot Sevens). By the early 1930s, however, Louis Armstrong had turned to the big-band format, having moved back to New York and becoming one of the best-known musicians in America.

By 1926, jazz had transcended its narrow southern appeal and become a national craze. Jazz flourished not only in New Orleans and Memphis, from which it sprang, but also in Chicago, New York, Detroit, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, all cities to which it migrated. The jazz stylists of the early 1920s would soon share center stage with Jimmie Lunceford, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and other groups of the big-band era. Meanwhile, the virtuosity of such soloists as trumpeter Louis Armstrong, vibraphonist Lionel Hampton, and pianists Teddy Wilson, Earl "Fatha" Hines, and Mary Lou Williams commended them to white musical combinations as well as to black ones. In the late 1920s recording companies became centralized in New York, black Broadway reawakened, and the club scene provided work for black musicians. Many of Chicago's most influential musicians—King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, and Jelly Roll Morton—moved to New York, now the center of the jazz world.

Duke Ellington and the Big Band Era

However, it was Duke Ellington from Washington, D.C., who grabbed the spotlight of New York's big-band era. His public image, a legacy of Fletcher Henderson, was self-consciously tailored. A professional musician, he looked every inch a New Negro whose racial pride and devotion to the best interests of the race were visually encoded into his style. Reflecting on his music in 1931, Ellington compared it to the cultural work of the Harlem Renaissance, saying that he wanted to "portray the experience of the colored races," as Countee Cullen and others had done through literature. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., a scholar of the Harlem Renaissance, has gone so far as to conclude that "the 1920s, as it should be remembered, saw the rise of surpassingly accomplished musicians such as Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington, whose artistry had a greater influence on the nation as a whole than the work of any of the renaissance writers."

Motion Pictures

The African American community's outrage in 1915 against D. W. Griffith's racist motion picture *Birth of a Nation* underscored the great hunger of African Americans for films that featured members of their race in a positive light and addressed issues that affected their lives. It is no coincidence, then, that black film companies began to appear in Harlem in 1916. The most significant of the black companies were the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, established by the brothers George and Noble Johnson in 1916, and Oscar Micheaux's film and book company, begun in 1918.

Before the Lincoln Company's demise in 1923, the Johnson brothers produced at least six films and pioneered in establishing patterns for advertising, booking, and promotion that would be imitated by other black independent filmmakers. Micheaux, a man of great drive and energy as well as shrewd business acumen, was the most important and prolific producer of black films during the 1920s. Yet, he and other African Americans in this field were never able to overcome the restrictions imposed by their limited capital, their inability to purchase state-of-the-art equipment, and the vast advertising budgets and powerful distribution systems of the white filmmakers with whom they competed in the African American community.

The early black filmmakers produced a steady stream of films, called "race movies" with all-black casts. Coming before the "talkie" revolution, the silent black films played in southern segregated theaters and in northern urban black neighborhood theaters. On occasion, they played as well at black churches and schools. Race movies were intended by their producers to offer more than entertainment. They provided black audiences with a separate

The Micheaux Film Corporation: Cameraman, director, and actor
Oscar Micheaux's silent films, such as *Within Our Gates* (1920), addressed black social concerns.

film culture insulated from the racial stereotyping of Hollywood; they gave black film actors and craftsmen the opportunity to express their cinematic talent with dignity; and they guaranteed black entrepreneurs control over the means and content of production. The films presented black versions of the established Hollywood genres: musicals, westerns, gangster films, and melodramas. The racial pride evoked by these films, the real subtext for all black film production, rested in the novelty of seeing black actors of all types in the same popular film genres that existed in the world of Hollywood with white actors. Hollywood routinely either excluded black actors or gave them demeaning, stereotyped parts.

Black films did not so much offer a separate aesthetic genre as respond to the commercial demands of black audiences who shared, with white audiences, a general popular understanding of what constituted cinematic entertainment. In some instances, black films made explicit social statements. One such example was the film *Scar of Shame* in 1927. The film, produced by the Colored Players Corporation, directly addressed issues of racial respectability and racial uplift, through the story of a woman from lowly origins who marries into the black middle class. Oscar Micheaux's silent films sought to address social concerns important to blacks. He perceived his film *Within Our Gates* (1920) as the black response to *Birth of a Nation.* For example, Micheaux's film contains a lynching scene and depicts a sexual assault of a virtuous black woman by a white man. It ends with a message of racial uplift by the well-educated and supremely refined character Dr. Vivian, who intends to be a leader of the race. *Birthright,* a silent movie from 1924, also featured as the hero a member of the black educated elite—in this case a Harvard-educated black man who goes south to found a school for the purpose of racial uplift.

Black actors began to appear before wider audiences beginning in the war years, especially with their employment in plays written by white authors. In 1917 a group of black actors under the sponsorship of Emily Hapgood presented three one-act plays by playwright Ridgely Torrence at the Garden Theater in New York's Madison Square Garden. Torrance's *The Rider of Dreams, Granny Maumee, and Simon the Cyrenian: Plays for a Negro Theater* marked the first time that African American actors had commanded the serious attention of New York's white critics and the general press. Because the United States entered the war on the day following the opening of the three one-act plays, black dramatists had to wait until the war's end before they could claim a substantial place in American public entertainment.

Postwar Theater

In 1919 there was a revival of interest in African Americans in the theater with the appearance of Charles Gilpin as the Reverend William Custis in John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln*. In the following year Gilpin's performance in the title role of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* received such outstanding acclaim that he was given an award by the Drama League of New York as well as the NAACP's Spingarn Medal. Some critics predicted for him a career similar to that of Ira Aldridge, who had captivated European audiences with his Shakespearean roles in the previous century.

In 1924 Paul Robeson played the leading role in O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. It was the first time in American history that a black man had taken a principal role opposite a white woman. In 1926 Paul Green of the University of North Carolina brought to New York *In Abraham's Bosom*, in which Jules Bledsoe played the leading role, ably assisted by Rose McClendon, Abbie Mitchell, and Frank Wilson. The play was a distinct success and demonstrated both the adaptability of African American life to the theater and the ability of African American actors in the theater. In the following year, *Porgy*, a folk play of black life in Charleston by Dorothy and DuBose Heyward, was produced by the Theater Guild. Once more, black actors Rose McClendon, Frank Wilson, and others in the cast captivated New York audiences. These plays about black life by white authors reached a high-water mark with the long-running production in 1930 of Marc Connelly's *The Green Pastures*, a fable of a black person's conception of the Old Testament, with Richard B. Harrison as "De Lawd."

Black Musicals

Popular musicals, written and produced by blacks themselves, appeared on Broadway, the longest running being *Shuffle Along* by Eubie Blake (music), Noble Sissle (lyrics), and Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles (writers). The play opened in 1921 and ran for over five hundred performances on Broadway and afterward toured theaters in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and other cities for more than two years. With the songs "I'm Just Wild about Harry," "Love Will Find a Way," and "Shuffle Along" masterfully performed by talented singers and dancers, *Shuffle Along* enjoyed record-breaking success. "I'm Just Wild about Harry" would be revived as the campaign theme song in 1948 by Democratic presidential candidate Harry Truman. Although overshadowed by the extraordinary success of *Shuffle Along*, another Broadway musical *Put and Take* (1921), by Irving Miller (the brother of Flournoy Miller of *Shuffle Along* fame), was described in *The New York Times* as a lively "all-Negro revue . . . filled with excellent dancing, good singing and quite a dash of comedy." In 1923 Irving Miller also produced the musical *'Liza* and the following year *Dinah*, which introduced the popular dance the "Black Bottom" to New York.

The Charleston

Black musicals contributed to the image of the Roaring Twenties. In 1923 the black-produced Broadway musical *Runnin' Wild* contained songs by stride pianist James P. Johnson, whose keyboard style decisively influenced the prolific songwriter Thomas "Fats" Waller, probably best known for his song "Ain't Misbehavin,'" which he wrote for

Shuffle Along chorus girls
Shuffle Along was the longest running Broadway musical by blacks in the 1920s.

the Broadway play *Hot Chocolates.* Although the Broadway show *Runnin' Wild* is little known today, James P. Johnson's "The Charleston" remains the "theme song" of the 1920s, the first few bars of which automatically call forth an image of the decade. The song's melody and rhythmic structure were influenced by the southern dance, which became a national fad following the debut of *Runnin' Wild.* The song "The Charleston" may actually have resulted from the particular migration patterns of the early part of the twentieth century, which brought black migrants from Georgia and the Carolinas to New York. James P. Johnson admitted that he often altered his solo piano performances in New York to meet the music requests of migrants from Charleston, South Carolina.

Lesser-known black musicals introduced singers and dancers who would later come to fame on the stage. Blake and Sissle's *Chocolate Dandies* ran three months on Broadway in 1924. In its chorus line was then-unknown Josephine Baker, who would soon become the rage of Paris. Another black woman who would soon enjoy international acclaim was Florence Mills. First appearing in *Shuffle Along,* she later gained leading roles in a number of white-produced musicals that featured all-black casts—*Plantation Revue* (1922), *Dover Street to Dixie* (1923), *Dixie to Broadway* (1924), and *Blackbirds of 1926.* Mills's headliner roles in those musicals brought her top billing and other celebrity benefits that had been previously reserved for male comedians. Her performances, which included pantomiming, singing, and dancing, were considered signal triumphs in New York, Paris, and London. Her death in 1927 at the age of thirty-one opened the way for new women singers (Ethel Waters, Adelaide Hall, and Ada Ward) in subsequent versions of *Blackbirds.* In addition, *Blackbirds of 1928* brought tremendous renown to the tap dancer and actor Bill "Bojangles" Robinson.

The Harlem Renaissance

Before World War I and even before the migration of blacks into Harlem, black artistic talent had begun to flower in New York City. Its roots were planted in the world of black bohemia, located in the tenement district known as the Tenderloin on Manhattan's West Side, from Fifth to Seventh Avenues and between West 24th and West 42nd Streets. (As yet, blacks had not moved in significant numbers to Harlem.)

The Tenderloin

According to census data for 1900, the Tenderloin contained most of New York City's 60,000 black residents. Three-quarters of those employed were working as laborers or servants; about a thousand (less than 3 percent of total employed) had professional or clerical jobs.

In his novel *The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1927 [1912]), James Weldon Johnson describes the area around West 27th Street, just west of Sixth Avenue, as a vibrant world of clubs, cabarets, dance halls, and also brothels and gambling houses. It was a world that afforded unique places to gather, according to the book's protagonist, for "coloured Bohemians," prize fighters, famous black vaudevillian "minstrels"—"notables of the ring, the turf, and the stage." Comprising writers, composers, musicians, theatrical performers, and others in show business, the mélange of artists plied their craft at the turn of the twentieth century. Ever since black comedians Bert Williams and George Walker reached New York in 1896 and introduced their highly successful vaudeville team, white managers had begun to employ black entertainers. Aside from introducing the "cakewalk" dance to white New Yorkers, Williams and Walker (who at times played in blackface) appeared in numerous world-famous revues.

The Marshall Hotel

The precursor to the Harlem artistic community, black bohemia expanded as black migration increased and spread northward into the San Juan Hill area, with whites in the area moving elsewhere. When Bert Williams and George Walker rented their flat on West 53rd Street, they described their role as availing themselves to "all colored men who possessed theatrical and musical ability." According to black theater historian Karen Sotiropoulos, in the years before World War I, the Marshall Hotel on West 53rd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues became the residence for a coterie of talented figures, including James Weldon Johnson and his brother J. Rosamond Johnson, Bob Cole, Lester Walton, Ernest Hogan, James Reese Europe, and other entertainers who either lived or met there.

New York's segregated housing did not permit blacks to live in the white neighborhoods that constituted vaudeville's main centers, in Union and Madison Squares. Thus blacks sought to create opportunities and places for networking among themselves. The most outstanding spot for networking, mentoring, and collaborating was the hotel run by an African American named Jimmie Marshall at 127–129 West 53rd Street. The Marshall Hotel, a four-story brownstone, became the fashionable gathering place for black actors and musicians. Marshall converted what had been formerly a family residence into a rooming house, restaurant, and hotel. In his autobiography *Along This Way* (1933), Johnson referred to the Marshall as responsible for the black presence on the New York stage. The hotel also attracted white entertainment elites, who visited from time to time.

Black bohemia proved short-lived, however. The Marshall Hotel closed after a change in cabaret licensing laws in 1913. More important, the demographic pattern of the ensuing Great Migration began to shift to Harlem, where a housing glut led profit-hungry real estate agents and developers to open up their once racially exclusive market to black home purchasers and renters. Some blacks, such as George Walker, had moved to Harlem as early as 1908.

In the postwar years, however, black periodicals began to speak of Harlem as the "Negro's Zion" and "Race Capital of the World." Harlem had become a highly sought-out location, not merely by the many black southern migrants and Caribbean immigrants who settled there, but also by whites who flocked to Harlem for its nightlife and entertainment. By the mid-1920s, white magazines depicted Harlem as having surpassed Broadway as an entertainment magnet. White socialites in their limousines, politicians, gangsters, and white tourists all found their way to Harlem's cabarets and speakeasies. If Harlem represented to white tourists the opportunity (according to *Variety* magazine) for immersion in a "seething cauldron of Nubian mirth and hilarity," it also became a place for the literati of both races to come together for more highbrow pursuits.

Black Periodicals

Black authors and playwrights rose to prominence in New York during the 1920s, an era of prolific publishing for all authors. The growing pluralistic culture of urban America, particularly New York, offered black authors a vibrant mix of new ideas and art forms. During the second decade of the twentieth century, white and black intellectuals alike offered new frames of reference for analyzing and understanding race. Members of the black literati differed among themselves ideologically, shifting their positions and identifying with distinct yet frequently overlapping intellectual trends: cultural racialism (rejecting the biological construction of race), pragmatism, cultural pluralism, socialism, American cultural nationalism (as contrasted to European culture) and pan-Africanism.

In this cultural movement, the civil rights organizations—the NAACP and the National Urban League—played crucial supportive roles. Through their magazines' literary contests, banquets, and home parties, the officers of both organizations encouraged new literary talent and initiated opportunities to bring exposure to young black writers, as well as to broker introductions to influential white authors, publishers, and prospective patrons. Jessie Fauset, novelist, worked as the literary editor of *The Crisis* for seven years and brought into print for the first time the work of both Langston Hughes and Nella Larsen. Literary scholar Cheryl Wall also credits Fauset for mentoring or at least encouraging several other prominent Harlem Renaissance writers, including Countee Cullen, Jean Toomer, Anne Spencer, and Georgia Douglass Johnson. Also, to call attention to Harlem's budding talent, Fauset hosted readings and lectures at the 135th Street Library.

Charles S. Johnson of the National Urban League edited *Opportunity* magazine. Like *The Crisis*, *Opportunity* played a tremendous role in calling attention to younger

Jessie Redmon Fauset

As the literary editor of *The Crisis,* Fauset first published the work of Langston Hughes, among other talented writers and poets.

writers, especially with Charles Johnson's creating the opportunity for them to be introduced to New York's white literary establishment at a banquet he arranged at the Civic Club in March 1924. Organized as an event to honor Jessie Fauset and the recent publication of her novel *There is Confusion,* the banquet's larger purpose was to announce in a very public way the Harlem Renaissance itself. Members of the white publishing elite—Carl Van Doren, editor of *Century* magazine; Paul Kellogg, editor of *Survey Graphic;* Frederick Allen of Harper & Row; and other distinguished guests—sat in rapt attention for readings by new, young black artists. For example, after reading his poems, the twenty-one year-old Countee Cullen saw them appear in four national magazines.

The Civic Club event also signaled the ascent of the Harvard-trained philosopher Alain Locke, by then a professor at Howard University, as the architect of the New Negro renaissance. Serving as master of ceremonies, Locke's insightful remarks on the significance of this younger generation of black writers led to the request by Paul Kellogg that Locke edit a special Harlem series for *Survey Graphic.* The issue, which appeared in 1925, was further enlarged and published as the anthology *The New Negro* (1925), today recognized as the foundational text of the Harlem Renaissance. The Civic Club dinner was followed by numerous occasions for racially integrated conversations and networking. In large public affairs and in the salon atmosphere of homes, black writers conversed, laughed, and dined with New York's rich and famous. In growing numbers, black writers found their words in an array of influential periodicals—*Survey Graphic, Current History, The American Mercury, Modern Quarterly, Harper's, The Nation,* and *The New Masses*—that presented black authors to the larger American readership.

Alain Locke perceived this groundswell of interest in the arts as proof of Harlem having become a "race capital" and—more than that—of forming part of a larger transnational movement of "nascent centers of folk expression and self-determination." Locke noted that "Harlem has the same role to play for the New Negro as Dublin has had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia." Many black literary artists helped to play this role. Although only a sample of the entire number of black poets and novelists of the Harlem Renaissance, key figures include James Weldon Johnson, Eric Walrond, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Wallace Thurman, Rudolph Fisher, George Schuyler, Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Bennett, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Anne Spencer.

Before the Civic Club

The fame of Jamaican-born Claude McKay (September 15, 1890–May 22, 1948) preceded that of the cohort of young writers introduced at the Civic Club event in 1924. Such black writers as McKay, Fauset, and Jean Toomer (and earlier Paul Laurence Dunbar, W. E. B. Bois, and James Weldon Johnson) had already made a mark in literature. McKay, an active socialist, had published his poems and essays in a number of left-wing magazines in the 1910s, as well as briefly co-edited the leftist magazine *The Liberator.* One of the most acclaimed of the Harlem Renaissance writers, McKay was already heralded as a poet. James Weldon Johnson, the NAACP leader and also a novelist, would later describe McKay's poetry as "one of the great forces in bringing about what is often called the 'Negro Literary Renaissance.'" It is ironic, however, that for most of the 1920s McKay lived outside the United States—in the Soviet Union, France, and North Africa.

McKay immigrated to the United States in 1912 at twenty-one years of age, having already published his *Songs of Jamaica,* a collection of poems in the island's dialect. He attended Tuskegee Institute and Kansas State University before moving to New York. His poetic style was traditional in form but militantly defiant in its content. Perhaps his most well-known poems—"The Lynching," "If We Must Die" (written in response to urban race riots in 1919), "The White House," and "To the White Fiends"—most boldly express McKay's protest and bitter contempt for American racism. Seemingly having expended all his poetic talents, McKay turned to prose and in 1928 brought out *Home to Harlem.* In the following year, he published the novel *Banjo,* whose protagonist is a black expatriate and musician living in Marseilles. In the 1930s he published *Banana Bottom* (1933) and his autobiography *A Long Way from Home* (1937). During the years of the Harlem Renaissance, McKay's writings both enjoyed great acclaim and stirred great controversy on account of his unabashed affection for the black working class in all its complexity. His portrayal of the raw, even lurid side of black life in *Home to Harlem,* for example, left race-uplift readers such as Du Bois and Jessie, and younger readers such as Langston Hughes, inspired by the freedom to be able to write on such subjects.

Also respected as a writer before the Civic Club event was Jean Toomer (born Nathan Toomer, 1894–1967). The grandson of the black Reconstruction-era politician P. B. S. Pinchback, Toomer won accolades for his literary style in *Cane* (1923), his one major work of the Harlem Renaissance. Toomer did not live in Harlem; rather, he commingled in the white bohemian world of Greenwich Village, associating primarily with white writers and artists. Yet when *Cane* came out, it received far greater attention in the black press than in the white. Its rave reviews and sales in black circles were coupled with only modest sales among whites. Today, however, *Cane* is recognized as the first African American modernist writing and also as among the most extraordinary and evocative books in American literature in the first half of the twentieth century.

Divided into three parts, *Cane* offers a series of meditations, in the form of short stories and poems, on the meaning of black culture. Toomer had earlier taught briefly in a black school in rural Georgia, and it is this setting that serves as the basis of the short story "Fern." In Part One, "Fern" captures the dying, beautiful, and tragic black "folk-spirit" in a rapidly changing South of rural out-migration, technological innovation, secularization, and cultural loss. In "Fern" the rural South, along with its culture and history, is ill-equipped to survive the dawn of modernity. Toomer tells this story in his portrayal of the sensuous, untamable beauty of southern rural black womanhood, which he embellishes in death and decay and the slow setting of the sun. In Part Two, Toomer's modernist sensibilities turn to the urban North, particularly Washington, D.C. and Chicago, signaling frenetic, strident, repetitive, rhythmic syncopations—sounds of movement and of jazz. In a visual and sonorous rendering, Toomer writes: "Arms of the girls, and their limbs, which . . . jazz, jazz . . . by lifting up their tight street skirts they set free, jab the air, and clog the floor in rhythm to the music." Shortly after the appearance of *Cane,* Toomer retired from active participation in the New Negro literary awakening and the world of African Americans altogether, blending among whites instead.

Countee Cullen

The lyric quality, rich imagination, and intellectual content of Countee Cullen's poetry place him among the central figures of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1926 Alain Locke acclaimed Cullen as a genius, quintessentially young and talented—the best of what was "new" about the New Negro. "Posterity will laugh at us," Locke asserted in the January issue of *Opportunity,* "if we do not proclaim him now." Cullen (1903–1946) published his first book of poetry, *Color* (1925), to critical acclaim. His poems had individually appeared in numerous magazines—*Bookman, The American Mercury, Harper's, Century, The Nation, Poetry, The Crisis, Messenger,* and *Opportunity.*

One of most famous poems, "Heritage," in *Color,* appeared first in the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic.* "What is Africa to me?" Cullen asked in the first line of the poem, revealing his own unresolved conflict. Firmly committed to traditional poetic form, Cullen's work included both racial and nonracial subject matter. In the poems with a racial message, Cullen's choice of words is generally more delicate and subtle in protest than is the poetry of McKay or Langston Hughes. Indeed, Cullen emphasized his need to write on themes of his own choosing and was thus equally comfortable in search of the beauty and effectiveness of verse that did not depend on the use of racial experiences at all.

In his second book of poetry, *Copper Sun* (1927), he paid less attention to racial themes than he did in *Color.* When asked why, Cullen did not shy away from voicing his position on the responsibility of the black poet. He recoiled from the idea of racially politicized poetry. Although admitting that he was always conscious of his race, Cullen was quoted in the *The Brooklyn Eagle* in February 1924: "If I am going to be a poet at all, I am going to be POET and not NEGRO POET." Literary critics in his day and later praise him for his poems on racial subjects. Typical of the quality of his writings are these two lines, perhaps the best known of all Cullen's work:

> Yet do I marvel at this curious thing:
> To make a poet black, and bid him sing!

Langston Hughes

The most memorable writer of the Harlem Renaissance is Langston Hughes (1902–1967). He arrived in New York in 1921, by way of Kansas, Illinois, Ohio, and Mexico. He had come to New York to attend Columbia University, but after one year of study he was yet again on the road, this time on a freighter bound for Africa and Europe. Before he was twenty years old, his poems had been published in *The Crisis.* A prolific writer, Hughes wrote in various genres, challenging the restrictions of race no less boldly as restrictions on artistic form. He composed deeply moving verses full of race pride, such as "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," and of humble walks of life, as in "Brass Spittoons." His volume of poetry *Weary Blues* (1926) incorporated jazz and blues rhythms. Hughes's lyrics and subject matter flaunted his experimental modernist voice, but they also ruffled the feathers of Countee Cullen, who described the book as having "too much emphasis here on strictly Negro themes."

In 1927 Hughes followed with the volume *Fine Clothes to the Jew,* which was greeted with a mixture of admiration and denunciation. Like McKay, Hughes admired the colorful aspects of black vernacular culture—the blues and jazz, juke joints and shouting churches, and the complex individuality of what he fondly called the "low-down folks." Also in 1927, Hughes contributed to the bold, highly controversial, and short-lived journal *Fire!!* A versatile writer who did not shy away from politically charged and leftist themes, Hughes continued to write poetry in the 1930s as well as the successful novel *Not without Laughter* (1930) and a volume of short stories, *The Ways of White Folks* (1934). Later, he experimented with pieces for the theater. In 1940 his autobiography, *The Big Sea,* was published.

Poet Laureate of the Harlem Renaissance
Langston Hughes, shown here at his typewriter, also wrote novels, essays, and plays.

Window in Time

In Praise of the Black Vernacular

But then there are the low-down folks, the so-called common element, and they are the majority—may the Lord be praised! The people who have their hip of gin on Saturday nights and are not too important to themselves or the community, or too well wed, or too learned to watch the lazy world go round. They live on Seventh Street in Washington or State Street in Chicago and they do not particularly care whether they are like white folks or anybody else. Their joy runs, bang! into ecstasy. Their religion soars to a shout. Work maybe a little today, rest a little tomorrow. Play awhile. Sing awhile. O, let's dance!

Source: Langston Hughes, "The Negro and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation,* June 1926.

Harlem Renaissance Women

Writings by Harlem Renaissance women reveal gender consciousness but also differences among women in regard to literary style and class predilection. Jessie Redmond Fauset (1882–1961), a 1905 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Cornell University, was the leading female figure of the movement during its heyday in the 1920s. From 1919 to 1926, the literary arm of *The Crisis* flourished under her tutelage. Fauset introduced and encouraged new talent (recent scholarship deems her to be the true midwife of the Harlem Renaissance), along with writing novels and articles, reviewing publications, and translating the work of Francophone Caribbean writers. Her first novel, *There Is Confusion* (1924), won her respect as an author. A review in *The Crisis* called the book "the novel that the Negro intelligentsia has been clamoring for." While problems of race are present in the four books that she published, Fauset's intention was to emphasize universal qualities and values that make blacks react to their circumstances just as whites and other people do.

Although Fauset was very much a traditionalist in her style, employing familiar conventions of sentimentalism and the tragic mulatto, this fact did not prevent her second novel, *Plum Bum* (1929), from telling a complex story of racial passing, of racial concessions to patronage and the publishing industry, and of the gender limitations of marriage. Literary scholar Deborah McDowell finds the gender dimension of the book the most sophisticated of the plots, since the African American female protagonist, Angela Murray, whose light skin permits her to pass for white in order to better her material life, comes face to face with painful but inevitable gender realities. In the white world, she soon comes to realize that her fairytale understanding of wifehood and marriage is shattered, and she learns in the process to value a woman's individuality and independence—all this bringing her greater appreciation for the black world she left behind. Considered Fauset's best work, *Plum Bum* was followed by *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931) and *Comedy: American Style* (1933).

Gender is central to the novels of Nella Larsen (1891–1964). Of mixed-racial heritage (her mother was Danish and her father black), Larsen authored two important novels—*Quicksand*

(1928) and *Passing* (1929). In 1929 she became the first black woman to be awarded a Guggenheim fellowship. Both Larsen and Fauset focused on middle-class life, but Larsen was far less conformist, questioning many of the basic beliefs of the "Talented Tenth." *Quicksand*'s protagonist, Helga Crane, rejects the conservative values and ideas about women's dress and comportment taught at the black Naxos College (Saxon spelled backward). She finds no respite in Europe, where her white lover sees her only through the lens of primitivism. The novel's race leader, Ms. Hayes-Rore, is not respected as a race woman or black clubwoman but instead is caricatured along with her rhetoric and agenda of racial uplift. As the title *Quicksand* implies, Larsen's ending is a tragic one—its larger message critical of middle-class racial hypocrisy and of the inevitable fate of women who dare to question conformity. Such women find no refuge among whites, or in black institutions, or even in the largely female-populated church. Both *Quicksand* and *Passing* conclude with hopelessness and death.

Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) deliberately sought to give the impression that she was one of the young writers of the Harlem Renaissance—in age a peer of Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen. However, she fabricated her age, often claiming to be around ten years younger than she was. An educated woman who had trained under Alain Locke at Howard and under the famed anthropologist Franz Boas at Barnard in the 1920s, Hurston was both an anthropologist in her own right and a literary modernist.

It was not her age or educational attainment that took her on a path different from Fauset's and Larsen's but instead her childhood and specifically the rural folk culture of her childhood. Having been raised in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida, Hurston firmly believed in the racial "authenticity" of the rural folk. They were, to her, the natural embodiment of the life, soul, and moral health of black people as a group, and particularly for black women. Hurston, who always based her subject matter on rural black community life, conducted ethnographic research between 1927 and 1932 in Alabama, Florida, and the Bahamas in order to be faithful to their true dialects, beliefs, and practices. She showed negligible concern for interracial themes. Hurston's unique voice is found in the entanglement of sexuality, gender, race, region, and class. She focuses on folk customs, speech patterns, and values, addressing black women's sexuality by metaphorically freeing it from the oppressive gaze of both white people and the black middle class. Particularly in *Their Eyes Were Watching God,* female sexuality flowers in all-black towns and other rural settings that afford the book's protagonist Janey an evolving understanding of women's independence and regenerative power.

The Harlem Renaissance's intellectual
Arriving on the scene late, when many writers were well established, Zora Neale Hurston was both brilliant and prolific.

Hurston's flamboyant behavior—her antics and "darkey" jokes at the interracial parties hosted by the wealthy white patron of the arts, Charlotte Osgood Mason—also highlighted the differences between her and middle-class black Harlemites, who criticized Hurston for catering shamelessly to Mason's fascination with "primitives." Langston Hughes, after parting ways with Mason and her financial support, wrote that

Window in Time

Enter the New Negro

The pulse of the Negro world has begun to beat in Harlem. A Negro newspaper carrying news material in English, French, and Spanish, gathered from all corners of America, the West Indies and Africa has maintained itself in Harlem for over five years. . . . Under American auspices and backing, three pan-African congresses have been held abroad for the discussion of common interests, colonial questions and the future cooperative development of Africa. In terms of the race question as a world problem, the Negro mind has leapt, so to speak, upon the parapets of prejudice and extended its cramped horizons. In so doing it has linked up with the growing group consciousness of the dark-peoples and is gradually learning their common interests. . . . As with the Jew, persecution is making the Negro international.

Source: Alain Locke, preface to *The New Negro* (1925).

Mason wanted him to "be primitive and know and feel the intuitions of the primitive." Hurston, too, eventually fell out with her patron and escaped from under Mason's financial largesse, when she used her research trips and findings to inform her novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934) and her anthropological study *Mules and Men* (1935). In so doing, Hurston had broken the contractual agreement that gave Mason sole ownership of her research. Hurston's productivity continued throughout the 1930s, and in 1937 she published her most successful novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God.*

French Connections

Harlem was not the only race capital or nascent center of artistic blacks. The popular vogue of African visual artists and African American musicians captured the imagination of white audiences in cosmopolitan cities abroad, such as Paris, Marseilles, and London. Paris attracted an array of intellectuals, writers, artists, and musical performers of African descent from the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa who forged a diasporic community and articulated an internationalist outlook through their interaction and exchange of ideas.

In many ways, Paris in the 1920s resembled Harlem. Although smaller in number, the black population in Paris grew considerably more large and heterogeneous during World War I because of the presence of black troops from the United States and from France's colonies in Africa (primarily Senegal and the Sudan) and the Caribbean. For the black Americans who remained in or returned to Paris in the postwar years, the cosmopolitan character of Paris afforded a haven from the many reminders of racial inequality in the United States, and it also offered the opportunity to cultivate intellect, talent, fame, and fortune. American musicians went on tour to Paris, and some lived as expatriates in the city. Black visual artists studied in Paris. Harlem Renaissance figures Alain Locke, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Jessie Fauset, Jean Toomer, James Weldon Johnson, Countee Cullen, Gwendolyn Bennett, and others all traveled to Paris and incorporated Parisian settings into their writings.

The French initially became aware of African American popular culture as a result of World War I, when black soldiers, such as in Lieutenant James Reese Europe's 369th Infantry Regiment Band and other black regiment bands, carried the sounds of jazz throughout France. In the 1920s, such black American musicians as Palmer Jones's International Five, Louis Mitchell's Jazz Kings, Eugene Bullard, Ada "Bricktop" Smith, Florence Embry Jones, and Josephine Baker established their performance careers in Paris. For those African American entertainers, Paris offered celebrity status unattainable in the United States. For example, black drummer and band leader Louis Mitchell, considered among the earliest musicians if not the first to introduce jazz to Europeans, performed in vaudeville revues in England in 1915, and in 1917 Mitchell and his jazz band, the Seven Spades, played at concert in Paris. After the war, Mitchell returned to New York, but by 1920 he set sail for Paris after forming the new band Mitchell's Jazz Kings, of which Sidney Bechet was a member. The Jazz Kings played at hotels and dance clubs in France, and Mitchell, who remained in Paris until World War II, opened a restaurant in Montmartre, a hill in the northern part of the Right Bank known for its bohemian subculture since the 1890s, where artists, including black musicians and visual artists, continued to gather after World War I.

Of all the black performers, the most renowned—indeed, legendary—was Josephine Baker, who had previously danced in chorus lines in black hits on Broadway. Once in France, however, Baker set Paris afire in her Revue Negre in the mid-1920s. In *Opportunity* in 1927, Countee Cullen described the effect of the scantily banana-clad Baker: "Paris is in a state of violent hysteria over her; there are Josephine Baker perfumes, costumes, bobs, statuettes; in fact, she sets the pace."

As magazines heralded Harlem's popularity among whites, it was manifestly evident that the *vogue negre* in France occurred concurrently and may have even preceded the years when Harlem was in vogue. No more telling example was the growing influence of African art shapes, particularly African masks, on the European artist Pablo Picasso's epoch-making painting *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907). The fascination with primitive art and its relation to modern art connected whites in both France and the United States with African American artists and critics. The Parisian art collector Paul Guillaume published articles on African art in *Opportunity* during the 1920s, and he also co-authored with Thomas Monro the book *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (1924), which included pieces owned by the white American collector Albert Barnes.

In France, African-descended people from the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa formed a cosmopolitan community of color, but with different intellectual, social, political, and class perspectives. If black authors found in New York in the 1920s a plethora of periodicals in which to publish, the same could be said in France of African authors and editors of such newspapers and magazines as *Les Continents, La Voix des Nègres, La Race nègre, Le Courrier des Noirs, La Dèpêche africaine, Lêgitime Défense, La Revue du Monde noir, Le Cri des Nègres, L'Etudiant martiniquais, L'Etudiant noir,* and *Africa.*

Before New York's white literati paid public homage to the role of blacks in the arts, in 1921 France bestowed its highest literary award—the Prix Goncourt (Goncourt Prize)—on René Maran for his novel *Batouala.* Maran had been born in the French Caribbean colony of Martinique and had worked in an administrative position in French West Africa, so his prizewinning novel depicted Africans' indigenous culture and practices within the political context of colonialism. His portrayal of the cruel and debilitating effects of French colonial policies was unmistakable. Thus the Goncourt Prize made the book all the more an international sensation. Some blacks, for example, Jessie Fauset and Hubert Harrison, read *Batouala* in the original French; however, the book was translated into English in 1922 and was discussed and reviewed extensively in the black press. Maran's picture appeared on the cover of *The Crisis* that year.

News of Maran's achievement surprised and elated African Americans. Even the famous and elderly nineteenth-century black novelist Charles Chesnut wrote to black literary scholar Benjamin Brawley in 1922 that "while he [Maran] is not a United States Negro, I think his triumph is one of which all those who shared the blood of his race—for from his portrait he seems to be of the full-blood—may well be proud." Chesnut was especially complimentary of Maran's sonorous and visual treatment of nature—the wind, woods, streams, smoke, birds, and the like. Black nationalists Marcus Garvey, William Ferris, and J. A. Rogers also enthusiastically praised Maran.

Maran began to correspond with black writers as well as to contribute to black periodicals such as *Opportunity.* Before Alain Locke's *New Negro* or even the special *Survey Graphic* issue that introduced to many Americans the flowering literary movement in Harlem, Maran informed his French readers about such budding Harlem writers as Jessie Fauset, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Countee Cullen. Moreover, Harlem Renaissance notables visited Maran in Paris. Reflecting on the tremendous international stature of René Maran, literary scholar Brent Edwards proposed resetting the time of the black literary renaissance to account for the influence of Paris rather than Harlem. Edwards argued that the "the impact of *Batouala* at the dawn of the 'Harlem Renaissance' would mean reconfiguring the accepted cartography of black literary modernism. If nothing else the relocation of the center of a diasporic movement from Harlem to Paris calls attention to a broader understanding of black internationalism than heretofore recognized."

In Paris, black artists and intellectuals found a great diversity of languages and political perspectives—a diversity that produced linguistic and other ethnic challenges to transnational conceptions of diaspora. Language differences confounded a simple and straightforward translation of words. The black yet multi-ethnic community in France found that the process of translation was, according to Edwards, "indispensable to the pursuit of any project of internationalism, any 'correspondence' that would connect populations of African descent around the world." The Harlem writers certainly followed newspapers from the black Francophone world, while their counterparts in France followed the African American scene. Alain Locke was contacted in 1927 by Jane Nardal, a young student from Martinique at the Sorbonne in Paris, for permission to translate *The New Negro* into French. Nardal was well qualified to do this translation, and she was also able to publicize the book widely, given her contacts at Parisian newspapers, including *Le Soir* and *La Dèpêche africaine,* which was edited by the Guadalupe-born Maurice Satineau. Nardal and her sister Paulette were among a growing number of black intellectuals who, in the 1920s, located themselves within a larger black transnational movement.

Yet the articulation of a black diaspora revealed at times misunderstanding and differing viewpoints. For example, most black Americans held an opinion of France similar to that of Alain Locke, who lauded France for its racial egalitarianism. However, some of France's black colonial subjects, such as René Maran of Martinique and left-wing trade unionist Lamine Senghor of Senegal, took a more critical position. Maran wrote of the French: "They tolerate us because they need us more and more due to the growing lack of manual

Couple wearing raccoon coats, with a Cadillac
This James Van Der Zee photograph was taken on West 127th Street in 1932. The photographer was a chronicler of life in New York's Harlem.

labor. . . . But this has not prevented France up to now from blocking our access to jobs of primary importance." In addition, distinctions among persons of African descent over the usage of *noir, negre,* and *Negro*—all meaning "black"—connoted different and conflicting political and class orientations in the pursuit of racial equality.

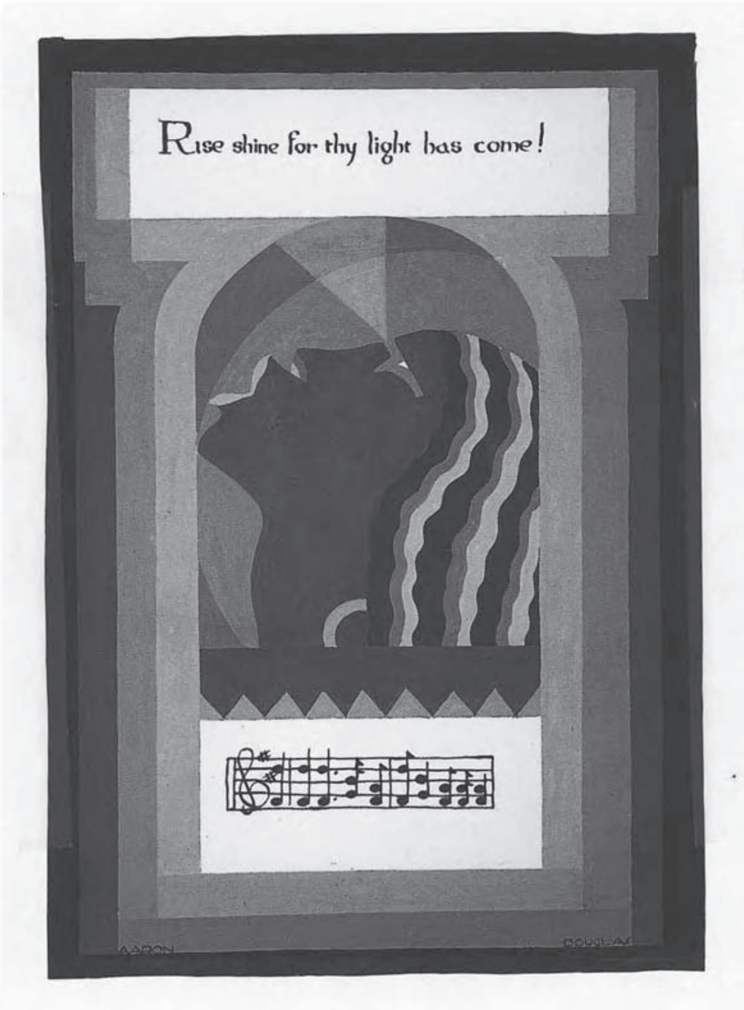
Visual Artists

Noting African art's influence on European modern art, Alain Locke proposed that African art forms be sources of inspiration to "culturally awakened" blacks, because they provided a liberating "racial idiom" in contrast to conventionalism. The most noted African American visual artists of the period included Aaron Douglass, Sargent Johnson, Richmond Barthé, William H. Johnson, Archibald Motley, Palmer Hayden, and Augusta Savage. The demand for black artistic renderings continued to heighten during the 1920s, when a plethora of periodicals', books', and theatrical and musical playbills' publishers demanded black illustrations. However, noted African American artists of the period developed their work not simply from their consciousness of the "legacy of African art"; several also developed their technique from training in Paris. In certain cases, exposure in the United States to the Bavarian-born modernist Winold Riess also played a formative role.

Not least of all, African Americans were emboldened to develop a variety of different styles (modernism, realism, primitivism, folk) and aesthetic forms (painting, sculpture, drawing, photography) through the support of such wealthy white patrons as the collector Albert C. Barnes and Charlotte Osgood Mason, as well as the wealthy black heiress A'Lelia Walker, the daughter of beauty magnate Madam C. J. Walker. Awards from philanthropic institutions such as the Barnes and Harmon Foundations played a significant role in encouraging artistic creativity. At a time of great cultural ferment, black visual artists experienced levels of unprecedented productivity. New Negro artists broke away from what Locke called "timid conventionalism" as they rendered in photographs, paintings, and sculpture the rural folk culture, the black vernacular in street life and cabarets, and the fashionable world of the black elite.

Photographers and Illustrators

Capturing the mood and the spirit of black life in Harlem took many forms, but none conveyed a more realistic picture of black middle-class life or Harlem's leaders and institutions than the photographs of James Van Der Zee (1886–1983). His photographs have significantly shaped the way the Harlem Renaissance is remembered. Van Der Zee operated a successful studio in Harlem for nearly a half-century, using as his subject matter ordinary Harlem residents as well as such celebrities as the poet Countee Cullen, political leader Marcus Garvey, and dancer Bill "Bojangles" Robinson. Van Der Zee's photographs chronicle the emergence of the New Negro, documenting memorable images of war veterans, parades, and leisure life on New York's Lenox Avenue and in the upwardly mobile Striver's Row.

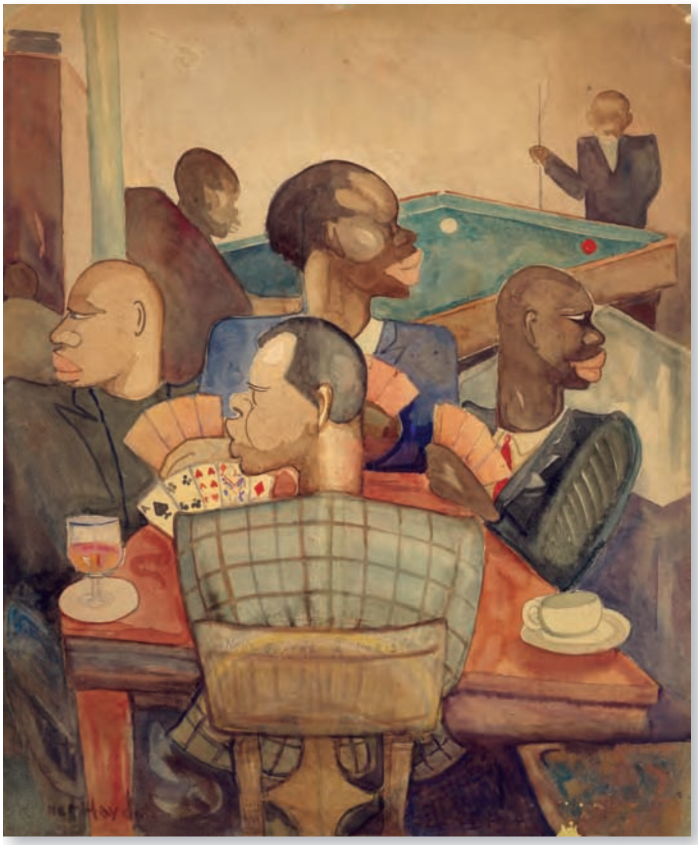

Rise shine for thy light has come!
AARON
DOUGLAS

Rise, Shine, Aaron Douglas

This painting depicts the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance. *The Howard University Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.*

The Great Depression of the 1930s ended the prosperity of both Harlem and Van Der Zee, who found himself struggling to make ends meet. His client base dropped precipitously, since people were far less able to pay for photographic services. The growing use of personal cameras further diminished his business. His work was rediscovered in the 1960s, when it was included in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1968 exhibition *Harlem on My Mind.*

Like James Van Der Zee's photographs, the prolific artwork of Aaron Douglas (1898–1979) seems to embody the spirit of the Harlem Renaissance. Douglas's art graced the covers of several playbills and more than thirteen books, including those by Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes. Douglas was a frequent illustrator for such popular magazines as *The Crisis* and *Opportunity.* Douglas moved from Kansas to Harlem in 1925 and quickly became acquainted with the elite coterie of intellectual and cultural leaders. He



***Nous quatre à Paris* [We Four in Paris], Palmer Hayden, 1928–1930**

The figures, positioned very close to one another, form a tight unit that underscores their relationship, as does the similarity of their physical appearance in head shape and hairstyle.

abandoned the artistic style that he had studied as a student at the University of Nebraska, adopting instead a more stylized African-influenced aesthetic. In New York, Douglas studied under the German artist Winold Reiss, who had illustrated the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic,* the forerunner of Alain Locke's *The New Negro.* Reiss, a European artist who had been inspired by African sculpture, encouraged Douglas to look to his artistic "ancestral legacy" for inspiration.

Douglas's modernist aesthetic earned him important commissions as a commercial artist and solidified his reputation as the preeminent visual artist of the period. Alain Locke called Douglas a "pioneering Africanist" and commissioned him to create the illustrations for *The New Negro* (1925).

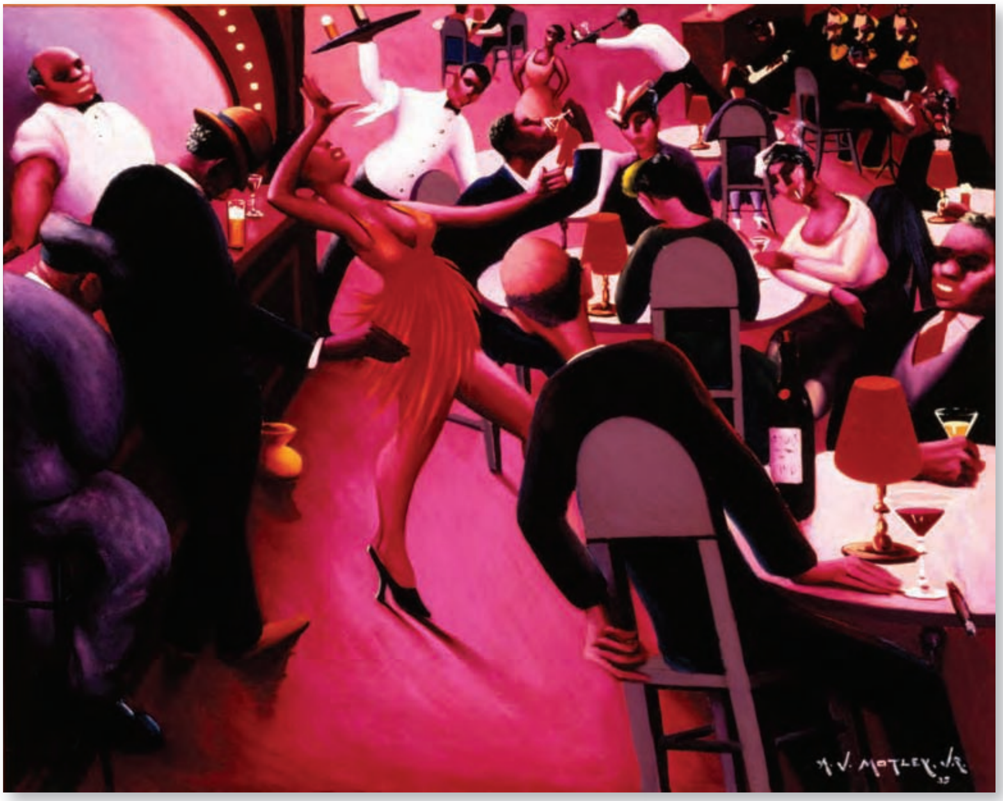
Painters

The painter Palmer Hayden gained stature as an artist from his experiences living in both Harlem and Paris in the 1920s. Born Peyton Cole Hedgeman in a small town in rural Virginia, Palmer Hayden received the name by which the world would come to know him when he enlisted in the army during World War I. A letter of reference for Hedgeman accidentally identified him as Palmer Hayden, and, afraid to advise the army recruiters of the mistake, he adopted the new name.

As a child, he attended a one-room schoolhouse where teachers first noticed and encouraged his special talent for drawing. Hayden quit school at a young age in order to go to work, performing such odd jobs as sand hauling and fish packing on the Potomac River. He never stopped drawing, however, and in 1906 he went to live with his aunt in Washington, D.C., to study commercial art. After nine years in the army, Hayden eventually settled in New York City, where he took art classes and exhibited his work at several venues, including the 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library (now called the Schomburg Center for Research on Black Culture). In New York, Hayden supported himself with jobs that also served his interest in art. For example, he cleaned the studio of an art instructor who, in return, taught him to paint in oils.

In 1926, Hayden was thrust into the limelight after winning first prize in the Harmon Foundation Awards for Negro Artists. The Harmon Foundation provided support to a number of important black artists. The prize money and support from wealthy white patrons allowed Hayden to travel to France, where he eschewed formal study and instead let his own experiences inform his work.

Hayden experimented with a variety of styles and subjects, creating post-Impressionistic seascapes, comic cartoon sketches, a series based on the life of African American folk hero John Henry, and a sensitive nude self-portrait in watercolor. Hayden is most known for his scenes of urban black life, such as his *A Midsummer Night in Harlem* (1938). Some black art critics



***Saturday Night*, Archibald J. Motley, Jr., 1935**

This stylized, shorthand depiction of cultural groups was popular in the American Scene painting of the time.

found Hayden's portrayal of black physiognomy—with round heads and exaggerated lips, eyes, and ears—to be offensive. Describing Hayden as "a talent gone far astray," art historian James Porter compared Hayden's representations of black people to "ludicrous billboards that once were plastered on public buildings to advertise the blackface minstrel." However, this visual idiom was employed by other black artists, including Archibald J. Motley, Jr., in part because it spoke of and to black working-class culture.

Much of Hayden's oeuvre portrays homosocial communities—groups of men at work or enjoying one another's company during their leisure time. *Nous quatre à Paris* features four dapper black men (including him) seated around a table and playing cards; two others shoot pool in the background. The relationship among men, a fact further signified by the painting's title, represents the figures not as four independent beings but as four bodies involved with one another so as to constitute a "we."

Archibald J. Motley, Jr. (1891–1981) was an outstanding Chicago artist noted for paintings of his city's black nightlife and for portraits of his family and friends. Motley's two concerns, presented in different styles, convey the different representations of black life and culture that were often hotly debated in regard to New Negro literature. Motley, the child of a middle-class family living in an integrated Chicago neighborhood, enjoyed a relatively privileged upbringing before enrolling in the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Removed from the modernist New York art scene, Motley was schooled in a realistic aesthetic and was taught to disdain the modernist aesthetic as epitomized by the works of the pivotal Armory Show of 1913, officially called the International Exhibition of Modern Art, which was the first large-scale exhibition in the United States of modernist European and American art.

Motley began his career as a portrait painter, undertaking what he considered a "scientific" study of race. His portraits of family members and of women of mixed racial heritage, such as *Octoroon Girl* (1925), won him a Gold Medal from the Harmon Foundation. Art scholars note that his renderings of very light-skinned, elite middle-class women were intended to question ideas of racial demarcation. In fact, the similarity between Motley's portraits of apparently well-to-do mulatto and octoroon women and those of his white wife, painted during the same period, are striking—offering dignified and refined images that are virtually undistinguishable as far as racial difference is concerned.

Motley's stature grew largely from his later work, however, particularly from his Bronzeville series of paintings, which focus not on the accoutrements of the black elite but rather on the world of leisure in Chicago's black working-class neighborhoods. This series did not express the realist aesthetic of his portrait work but rather modernism with its vibrant colors, rhythmic motion, and a very different visual idiom for his peopled streetscapes and cabaret scenes. Motley's painting *Saturday Night* (1935) depicts large, bright red lips and brilliantly white smiles, reflecting the artist's attempt to use a distinct visual language to signify class differences among blacks.

A talented and versatile artist, Motley was one of the first African American artists of the 1920s and 1930s to achieve a significant degree of critical as well as financial success. He became the first black artist to mount a one-man show in a major New York gallery. He was also the first African American to win a Guggenheim fellowship, which financed a year's study in Paris (1929–1930).

On several levels, the artist Sargent Johnson shared Alain Locke's interest in producing "Negro art." He was among those African American artists who heeded Locke's call to claim the "legacy of the ancestral arts" not only thematically but also in a visual aesthetic form. Johnson was less interested in proving the legitimacy of such a project to the larger white world than in providing his own people with an image they could embrace.

Johnson once stated: "It is the pure American Negro I am concerned with, aiming to show the natural beauty and dignity in that characteristic lip, and that characteristic hair, bearing and manner; and I wish to show that beauty not so much to the white man as to the Negro himself." Although many black artists included African content in their works—for example, Douglas's *Aspects of Negro Life: The Negro in an African Setting* (1934)—or incorporated African art into their paintings, such as the Fang statuary in Palmer Hayden's *Fetiche et Fleurs* (1931–1932), Johnson conveyed a restrained, often spare, sculptural aesthetic of African forms.

Based in the San Francisco Bay area, Sargent Johnson was one of the few West Coast artists to rise to national prominence and to participate in the Harmon Foundation exhibitions in New York. Therefore, although Johnson can clearly be considered a part of the New Negro arts movement of the 1920s and 1930s, his California context and geographical distance from Harlem and other urban centers of the North exposed him to other influential artistic styles, such as the California modernism of his local peers and the populist Mexican art movement, exemplified by the murals of Diego Rivera. Later in his career, Johnson would abandon his earlier artistic notions of racial representation and experiment with abstract forms.

Clashing Artistic Values

The decade of the 1920s witnessed not only the flowering of "Negro" arts in the realms of music, visual media, and in literature but also controversy over the role and the meaning of art. New Negroes debated form and content, the social significance of art, its "racial" characteristics, and the acceptable boundaries of artistic representation. At the heart of the clash of opinions was the explicit and sometimes implicit argument over the image of blacks that art codified in the minds of whites.

Art as Propaganda

Of the major intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance, W. E. B. Du Bois was the most dogmatic advocate of the propagandistic role of art. In his essay "Criteria of Negro Art" in 1926, which was given first as a speech in June and published in *The Crisis* in October of that year, Du Bois insisted that "all Art is propaganda and ever must be, despite the wailing of the purists. . . . I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda." The challenge for the black artist, as Du Bois identified it, was to create art work, be it literary or visual, that countered the stereotypes, the caricatures, and the overall racist images replete in the larger white society.

Du Bois loathed Claude McKay's novel *Home to Harlem* for its depiction of the seamier side of black life—the fighting, drunkenness, and sexual promiscuity. Remarking that the book left him feeling "distinctly like taking a bath," Du Bois railed against McKay's willingness to cater to whites' fascination with the primitive, sarcastically lambasting him for satisfying "that prurient demand on the part of white folk for a portrayal in Negroes of that utter licentiousness which conventional civilization holds white folk back from enjoying. . . ." To cultural arbiters such as Du Bois and Jessie Fauset, who likewise shunned the blues and jazz, books like McKay's harmed the struggle for racial equality.

Although abhorring the idea of art as propaganda, Countee Cullen of the younger generation also denounced what he believed to be pejorative representations of black people. He argued that they simply replicated and confirmed racist stereotypes. In March 1928, while working as the assistant editor of *Opportunity*, he pursued this topic in his column, "The Dark Tower," admonishing: "Negroes should be concerned with making good impressions. They cannot do this by throwing wide every door of the racial entourage, to the wholesale gaze of the world at large. Decency demands that some things be kept secret; diplomacy demands it; the world loses its respect for violators of this code. . . . Let art portray things as they are, no matter who is hurt, is a blind bit of philosophy."

It is interesting that the black artists who repudiated the values of Du Bois, Fauset, Cullen, and other advocates of middle-class propriety chose to do so in the white press, thereby announcing in a very public way the debate, as well as their own liberation from a politics of respectability that held African Americans imprisoned to the white gaze, or in Cullen's words "the wholesale gaze of the world." The message of such writers as McKay, Hughes, and Wallace Thurman was meant for white readers no less than for the black literati. In the article "The Negro and the Racial Mountain," which appeared in *The Nation* in 1926, Hughes defiantly maintained his artistic freedom, as he rebelliously summoned a new race consciousness and a generational divide: "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

In 1926, a year of warring words among black artists, other rebels, including Hurston, Aaron Douglas, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Gwendolyn Bennett, rallied and founded the daring and controversial magazine *Fire!!,* whose byline read "Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists." In its short life (only one issue was published), *Fire!!* flaunted an artistic style that defied the restraint of the older artistic values. Richard Nugent's contribution "Smoke, Lilies and Jade" celebrated same-sex desire. Wallace Thurman's short story "Cordelia the Crude," also in *Fire!!,* portrayed Harlem in all its stark realities. Writing in *The New Republic* in 1927, Thurman chastised those African Americans who felt the need to hide from readers the lifestyle of urban blacks who are "still too potent for easy assimilation." In Thurman's own short life (he died at age 32), he wrote novels, plays, short stories, and served in editorial positions for both black and white periodicals. He is best known for his novels *The Blacker the Berry* (1929) and *Infants of the Spring* (1932).

In an ongoing conversation in white magazines, black writers clashed with one another over the meaning of black creative expression. George Schuyler departed from both Du Bois and Langston Hughes in his article "The Negro-Art Hokum," which ran in *The Nation* in 1926. Ever the iconoclast, Schuyler argued that the very concept of "Negro art" was bogus—as he termed it, "self-evident foolishness." For Schuyler, the salient issue was not whether blacks in America exhibited talent but whether their artistic expression was racially unique at all.

Race Literature

As early as the 1890s, black writers Victoria Earle Matthews and W. E. B. Du Bois had written about racial distinctiveness in the arts. Victoria Earle Matthews lectured and wrote about "race literature" as early as 1895, then predicting the full development of a body of literature essentially different from the larger American literature. In 1897 Du Bois emphasized in "The Conservation of Races" not the validity of physical differences of race but rather spiritual and psychical differences—of "Negro genius, Negro literature and art, Negro spirit." Schuyler disagreed. In words that must have enraged his opponents, he opined: "The literature, painting, and sculpture of Aframericans—such as there is—is identical in kind with the literature, painting, and sculpture of white Americans: that is, it shows more or less evidence of European influence." Schuyler, rejecting outright the notion of an essential black difference in the arts, went so far as to declare that "the Aframerican is merely a lampblacked Anglo-Saxon."

Langston Hughes's article "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" was actually a rebuttal to both Du Bois and Schuyler. It appeared one week after the Schuyler piece and affirmed cultural uniqueness. Equally important, Hughes's 1926 book of poems *The Weary Blues* was considered at the time and continues to be considered one of the most successful attempts to translate a black musical vernacular style and spirit into verse. Hughes's retort to Schuyler was based not merely on artistic theories but on successful artistic practice in the creation of such poems as "When Sue Wears Red," "The Weary Blues," "Danse Africaine," and "Jazzonia."

For Hughes, the barrier to black artistic expression took the metaphorical shape of a "mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America—this urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible." The access to a unique Negro cultural inheritance, Hughes contended, had been denied, since the black middle class consciously discouraged the young black artist from seeing "the beauty of his own people . . .

or if he does, to be ashamed of it when it is not according to Caucasian patterns." Class perspective is central to Hughes's understanding of a uniquely Negro art. Celebrating the "blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing the Blues," Hughes concludes his essay with an exhilarating praise song for the "low-down folks."

Jean Toomer also weighed in on this discussion with his article "Race Problems and Modern Society," published in 1929. Toomer bemoaned the race-talk of the 1920s, believing race to have become more rigidified than ever before and with "the new Negro . . . much more Negro and much less American than was the old Negro of fifty years ago." Toomer advocated the "melting pot" solution, but he posited that such a melding and blending of ethnicities and races into a homogeneous people would emerge only after mankind put an end to the idea of race. To the light-skinned Toomer, race was a false idea. Rather than celebrate race, as did the black literati, he urged the abandonment of the "hypnotic labels" of racial classification. "There is only one pure race—and this is the *human* race. We all belong to it—and this is the most and the least that can be said of any of us with accuracy."

Art and Social Change

In the context of the 1920s, both the white literati of the Lost Generation and the black literati of the Harlem Renaissance fully believed in the capacity of the arts for social change. With regard to racial change, however, later generations of historians and literary critics would deem naïve the New Negro's belief that the arts served the struggle for racial equality—or, as historian David Levering Lewis has pithily termed it, "civil rights by copyright." If racial integration is one measure of change, then change had indeed come to parts of Harlem, but not in the Cotton Club or Small's Paradise so much as in the literary, publishing, and intellectual circles that brought together Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten, Walter White, and H. L. Mencken of *The American Mercury;* Zora Neale Hurston and Franz Boas; Countee Cullen and Frederick Allen of Harper & Row; and Alain Locke and Paul Kellogg of *Survey Graphic.* In banquet halls, universities, publishing firms, homes of the white and black literati, and also in the cabarets occurred what scholar George Hutchinson describes as "the intellectual and institutional mediations between black and white agents of the renaissance."

No one exemplified the meaning of "civil rights by copyright" better than James Weldon Johnson. It was Johnson who best understood the multifaceted struggle that called artists, as well as lawyers, educators, and political activists, to arms, because he had been all of them, including a diplomat, which may explain his sympathetic views toward artistic freedom. As both an accomplished literary artist and the executive director of the NAACP, Johnson represents the enduring image of a true renaissance man. From the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, he wrote and anthologized poetry, composed lyrics for songs ("Lift Every Voice and Sing," familiarly called the "Negro National Anthem"), worked directly in the creation of musical theater with pioneering figures such as Bob Cole and his own brother J. Rosamond Johnson, and authored the novel *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912) and his autobiography, *Along This Way* (1933). An NAACP officer in the 1910s and 1920s, Johnson fought valiantly against lynching, through fundraising and the mass participation of the silent march. He helped to strategize the NAACP's legal battles, and in numerous articles in newspapers and magazines he raised his voice of protest against racial discrimination.

And Johnson was not alone as an artist in the civil rights vanguard. Other NAACP leaders wrote fiction and found themselves immersed in this cultural movement. Du Bois, but also Walter White, who risked his life to go into the South to write about lynching, was famously involved in the Harlem Renaissance. White regularly brought together black and white luminaries in his home, and he also wrote the novels *Fire in the Flint* (1924)—a story of racial violence and the psychic journey to black consciousness—and *Flight* (1926). The respected writer and thinker H. L. Mencken influenced Walter White in the debate over artistic freedom. Mencken rejected the hypocrisy and prudishness of white readers who were appalled by sexual images and yet apathetic about lynching and other social injustices.

Amid the growing racism of the early twentieth century—with its emboldened Ku Klux Klan, its segregated army that fought to safeguard world democracy, its lynchings, and its horrific Red Summer of 1919—James Weldon Johnson saw all these events firsthand from the vantage points of artist and civil rights warrior. On various levels, the positive link between the arts and civil rights did not escape him. In response to the NAACP's fundraising campaign against lynching, the casts of the popular musicals *Shuffle Along* and *Runnin' Wild* held successful charity benefit performances.

Johnson was able to assess the racial situation, as few others could. His first awareness of a glimmer of white respect for black artists appears in his account of the artistic world of black bohemia at the dawn of the twentieth century. He watched this dim glow brighten into the extraordinary and illuminating exchange between white and black writers, publishers, and rich benefactors—with the unprecedented rise of black artists in the public sphere. Despite the racial limitations (for example, some whites' perceptions of blacks as primitive), the 1920s witnessed a newfound recognition and respect for black creative artists. Johnson focused on progress. "The creative author has arrived," he announced of those who had made best-seller lists, thus disproving racist claims about black intellectual and cultural inferiority.

Black artists, and Harlem, were in vogue. It seemed a new day—with lush parties, with music and theater, with rich conversation, with the good life of travel to Paris and other cities abroad, with the speakeasies and cabarets, and, most of all, with boundless creativity. The leading black and white literati reveled in the parties of such whites as Charlotte Osgood Mason, Carl Van Vechten, and Nancy Cunard, and of such blacks as A'Lelia Walker, Walter White, and James Weldon Johnson. The arts appeared to be the elixir for America's racial ills. As early as 1911, David Mannes, the concertmaster of the New York Symphony Society, reflected this way of thinking when he stated that "through music, which is a universal language, the Negro and the white man can be brought to have a mutual understanding." For W. E. B. Du Bois in 1926, this cultural influence harkened a new day in racial pride and hope: "We black folk . . . have within us as a race new stirrings; stirrings of the beginning of a new appreciation of joy, of a new desire to create, of a new will to be; as though in this morning of group life we had awakened from some sleep that at once dimly mourns the past and dreams a splendid future."

However, hopes for a splendid future would soon be dashed. The stock market crash in October 1929 shattered the gaiety and optimism. Longstanding inequalities and malfeasance in the American economy had finally come home, like chickens to roost. The nation's economic foundation rapidly collapsed, unleashing poverty and devastation unknown in America. The arts did not perish, but the suffering caused by the Great Depression was unalleviated by a government ill-prepared for such a catastrophe. As the future got bleaker, some would even liken the economic fallout to God's punishment for the materialism, self-indulgence, and seeming wanton abandon of the Roaring Twenties. In this scourge of biblical proportions, they would invoke Old Testament language: "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

CHAPTER

23

Perspectives on the Present

Legal Challenges

Enduring Disparities: Health, Education, and Incarceration

Forgotten in Hurricane Katrina

Hip Hop's Global Generation

New Great Migrations

The Politics of Change

#1 For Hip Hop and
Vote.
VOTE OR DIE!

"Vote or Die" Rally in Detroit, 2004
Students at Wayne State University wait to see Hip Hop artist Sean "P Diddy" Combs who at the rally to encourage young people to vote.

For African Americans, the twenty-first century has unfolded to this point as a study in contradictions. The first evidence of this occurred in 2000, when the hotly contested presidential election between Republican candidate George W. Bush and his Democratic rival Al Gore was decided in the judicial system instead of the Electoral College. In a 5–4 ruling, the rightward-leaning Supreme Court narrowly decided the victory in favor of Bush despite numerous charges of Republican malfeasance during the recount in Florida, the crucial state on which electoral victory hinged and where Bush's brother served as governor. Nationally, less than 10 percent of the black vote had gone to Bush. Numerous continuing charges were filed on behalf of African Americans who said that they had been systematically denied the right to vote in Florida and other states.

Yet it was this controversial president who appointed two African Americans in succession as secretary of state—the most important voice, besides the president's, in representing the interests of the United States to the rest of the world. In the aftermath of the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, Colin Powell, America's first black secretary of state, played a key role in the Bush administration's decision to go to war in Afghanistan with the aim of capturing or killing al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. Powell would later be given a prominent role in launching America's invasion of Iraq, although he became increasingly estranged from the administration's handling of the Iraq War and other foreign policies. His decision to resign as secretary of state after President Bush's reelection in 2004 was fueled, many believe, by increasingly sharp ideological differences with Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and other administration war hawks.

Condoleeza Rice, who in Bush's first term served as the president's national security advisor, succeeded Powell as secretary of state in Bush's second term—an astounding first for a black woman. *Forbes* magazine's listing of the "100 Most Powerful Women in the World 2004" ranked Rice as Number One. "Advising the leader of the world's largest superpower—and having the ear of leaders around the globe—makes Rice, 49, the most powerful woman in the world," the magazine wrote. "When Rice speaks, she speaks for the president." (Hillary Rodham Clinton, then a U.S. senator from New York, was ranked fifth by *Forbes,* and Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg also stood among the top ten.) In 2005 the magazine of the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) called Condoleeza Rice a "political rock star."

But despite these powerful symbols of black achievement and influence, most African Americans perceived racial progress as stalled, if not in a downward spiral, during George W. Bush's presidency. In November 2007, survey findings of the Pew Research Center, a respected nonpartisan social-science research organization, indicated increasing cynicism among blacks when asked two questions: "Are blacks better or worse off now than five years ago?" and "Will life for blacks be better or worse in the future?" The report noted that 29 percent of African American respondents perceived conditions for blacks as

Secretary of State Colin Powel and National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice.

a group as having actually worsened in the five-year period leading up to 2007. This figure was up significantly from survey results in 1999, when only 13 percent of black respondents felt that the situation of blacks had deteriorated over the preceding five years. Contemplating the future, only 44 percent in 2007 (compared to 57 percent in a 1986 survey) envisioned progress, 21 percent envisioned worsening conditions, 31 percent predicted no change at all, and 4 percent had either no idea or no willingness to say.

Yet in 2007, blacks stood on the precipice of change. Exactly one year later, in November 2008, African Americans would wildly cheer the election of the first black president of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama. This same Pew Research Center survey, which was conducted from September 5 through October 6, 2007, showed most black respondents unable to imagine the possibility of Obama's victory.

For African Americans in the new millennium's first decade—in years that will be forever associated with great tragedy and unprecedented triumph—freedom and equality are undoubtedly perceived by some as attainable and by others as elusive.

Legal Challenges

The growing conservatism of the federal bench has been a major challenge to those blacks who perceive the Republicans presidents' judicial appointments in the last two decades as an attempt to turn back the clock of racial progress. However, many blacks, through such legal-defense organizations as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law, the Southern Poverty Law Project, and other liberal groups, have brought suits to the courts in litigation that challenged efforts to abridge the hard-won goals of the Civil Rights Era.

The 2000 Presidential Election

One of the major controversies surrounding the 2000 presidential election was the denial of the right to vote to African Americans in Florida. Bush's opponent Al Gore, other prominent Democrats, and many African Americans contested the election when they learned about attempts to prevent African Americans from voting. In the weeks following the election, a recount was undertaken in the contested Florida counties, and stories about various methods used to disenfranchise blacks began to leak out.

The long list of civil rights violations included moving polls or closing them early in minority areas. A Florida law that prohibits anyone convicted of a crime from ever voting again (even after serving his or her sentence) purged from the voter rolls not only ex-convicts but also individuals of the same name who had never committed a crime. Poll administrators were prevented from checking the registration status of African Americans. Notwithstanding all this, a 5–4 decision the U.S. Supreme Court blocked Gore's legal challenge by halting the recount in Florida; Bush was declared the winner by fewer than 600 votes, and the issue of African American voter disenfranchisement was never resolved.

In another case striking at black participation in the electoral process, the Court limited the ability of states to create congressional districts with majority African American populations. Ruling, again by a 5–4 margin, in *Vieth v. Jubelirer,* in 2004 the Court declared that political gerrymandering—the creation of congressional districts to determine an outcome—was illegal. Gerrymandering has been used for various political ends over the long course of U.S. history, and in *Vieth* the Court overturned its own 1986 *Davis v. Bandemer* ruling, which had upheld the state government's interest in controlling the boundaries of districts to facilitate

African American representation. The 2004 decision effectively allows African Americans to be spread out over several districts, diluting their presence in Congress.

Challenges to Affirmative Action

In 2005 the Court's conservatism was bolstered when Bush appointed John G. Roberts to succeed William J. Rehnquist as chief justice and Samuel Alito to replace the retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. In the conservative political climate of the Bush administration, affirmative action was one of the most discussed and challenged policies in the courts. In 2003, in *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger,* the Supreme Court ruled on the legality of the University of Michigan's affirmative action policies in both law school and undergraduate admissions. Not since the *Bakke* case in 1978 had the Court addressed this issue in higher education.

In 1996 Barbara Grutter, a forty-three-year-old white woman with an LSAT score of 161 (top score is 180) and an undergraduate GPA of 3.8 applied to the University of Michigan Law School, where she was initially wait-listed and ultimately rejected. Grutter filed a class action lawsuit against the university regents, claiming that the law school's affirmative action policy constituted racial discrimination under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which states that "No person in the United States shall on the basis of race, color or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

In *Grutter,* handed down in 2003, the Supreme Court reversed a lower court ruling and declared that diversity constitutes a compelling state interest and that the law school's admissions policy was constitutional, because, as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor argued in the majority opinion, "race-based action to further a compelling governmental interest does not violate the Equal Protection Clause so long as it is narrowly tailored to further that interest." Thus the Court upheld the constitutionality of race-conscious admissions policies at the law school. But in *Gratz,* rendered later the same day, the Court struck down the university's undergraduate "points based" admissions policy, with Chief Justice Rehnquist maintaining in the majority opinion that the assigning of additional points to an applicant solely on the basis of race was "not narrowly tailored to achieve the interest in educational diversity that respondents claim justifies their program." These two 5–4 decisions ultimately left the fate of affirmative action ambiguous by failing either to uphold specific challenges to it or to support its specific structure.

Racial diversity in schools remained a highly divisive legal issue, pitting conservatives' claim that the use of race in public policy to achieve diversity is detrimental to equality against civil rights advocates' argument that race must still be considered in remedying societal discrimination. The right of colleges and universities to use race as one of several factors in achieving a diverse student body may have been upheld by the federal courts in 2003, but long-agreed-on ideals outlined by the 1954 *Brown* decision on school integration were challenged by conservatives and struck down in 2007 in two cases, emanating from Seattle and Louisville.

It is perhaps an irony of the times and of the complicated challenges confronting civil rights advocates that the Court's only black member, the conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, believed recent school assignment plans based on race were just as unconstitutional as was the race-based segregation struck down in 1954, his opinion siding with that of the majority.

The Seattle and Louisville cases involved voluntary school desegregation plans that allowed race to be considered as a factor for some student assignments to schools. In both school districts, these plans were challenged by parents as a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Educators in both cities, working with parents and community members, had devised plans that allowed children the option of attending school outside their neighborhoods. Both cities' plans evolved in response to educators' negative experiences with segregation and far more positive experiences with diversity.

In its sharply divided 5–4 decision, split once again along ideological lines, the Supreme Court struck down both cities' voluntary school desegregation plans. Writing for himself and three fellow justices, Chief Justice Roberts ruled the districts "failed to show that they considered methods other than explicit racial classifications to achieve their stated goals." In a separate but concurring opinion that formed the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy suggested that race *may* be a component of school plans designed to achieve diversity—an opinion that allows for the possibility of race being a factor for other permissible educational purposes (such as tracking enrollment) but not for school assignment plans. Dissenting, Justice Stephen Breyer asserted that this ruling serves to "threaten the promise of Brown."

The case revealed just how far to the right the Court had moved in the past three decades. "It is my firm conviction," wrote Justice John Paul Stevens, "that no Member of the Court that I joined in 1975 would have agreed with today's decision."

Demands for Reparations

Although judicial decisions appeared increasingly opposed to African Americans' interests, several black statesmen and academics renewed demands for reparations for slavery. To some extent, this cry for reparations was motivated by decisions of the German government and German corporations to pay reparations to victims of the Holocaust and by the decision of the United States government to pay reparations to victims of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. Drawing on

REPARATIONS NOW!
They Owe Us...
Rally
AUGUST 17, 2002
WASHINGTON, DC

Protesters at U.S. capitol during reparations demonstration, August 2002.

these parallels, in 2000 Randall Robinson published *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks,* defending the idea of reparations. Every year since 1989, Representative John Conyers, Jr., of Michigan introduced legislation in Congress to establish a committee to study the possibility of paying reparations for slavery to African Americans, although so far he has met with little success.

Of all reparations movements, that of African Americans faces some of the most difficult odds against success, given the time delay between slavery and African Americans' claims today as citizens in U.S. courts, as well as questions of sovereign immunity and the statute of limitations. All these issues figured in the case of survivors' and heirs' attempts to be compensated for the 1921 Tulsa race riot.

In 2001 the Tulsa Race Riot Commission, which the Oklahoma state legislature established in 1997 to investigate that riot, recommended compensation for the survivors. The legislature refused to pay compensation, although it did allocate funds to redevelop the area destroyed by the riot and to establish a memorial. Dissatisfaction with that response led to legal action. In *John Melvin Alexander et. al v. Oklahoma,* the 150 survivors (among them John Hope Franklin) and their descendants sued the state for its complicity in the destruction of Tulsa's historic African American Greenwood district. The plaintiffs also brought charges against the local police, the Ku Klux Klan, the National Guard, and the legal system over the riot and its aftermath.

In 2004 the case came before the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma. Lawyers for the city and the state moved to dismiss the suit on the grounds that the statute of limitations had passed in 1923, two years after the riot. In March 2004, the U.S. District Court ruled against the victims of the riot, declaring that although the statute of limitations could have been delayed, the victims should have filed their lawsuit at least in the 1960s. At that time, wrote U.S. District Court Judge James O. Ellison, they would have received a fair hearing. The appellate court upheld this ruling in September 2004, stating that the case could have been brought in the 1980s, when a book about the riots was published.

In fact, immediately after the riot some African Americans had attempted to obtain redress by filing suit. Their cases hung in legal limbo, however, since claims of culpability on the part of white Oklahomans and the Oklahoma state government were rejected. Both the Commission Report and the unfavorable district court opinion agreed that the social and political climate of the 1920s, during the heyday of Jim Crow, made it unlikely that the plaintiffs could have successfully pursued their legal claims. For eighty years the state of Oklahoma and the city of Tulsa reinforced the idea that the Greenwood community itself was to blame for the tragedy. And thus the black residents had no right to relief or apology.

Harvard law professor Charles Ogletree, among the lawyers who in 2003 sued the Oklahoma governor and the Tulsa mayor and chief of police, writes: "Plaintiffs' failure to file suit before 1921 is the result of circumstances other than neglect. . . . These are not neglectful plaintiffs, but fearful ones; they were not slumbering, but all too awake to the reality of silence and intimidation. The mere passage of time and the possibility of a change of heart on behalf of the government and people of Oklahoma are insufficient to break the code of silence imposed in 1921 and perpetuated by three generations of Oklahomans."

As a result of this ruling, Ogletree unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the U.S. Supreme Court to require a more favorable standard for the determination of statutes of limitations in cases involving historic wrongdoing. He argued that defendants should not benefit by the statute of limitations if they have concealed vital information about their culpability in past crimes, thus creating impediments for plaintiffs seeking redress.

Although the possibility for slavery reparations remains distant, the issue's recurrence highlights the haunting and unflattering history of America's racial slavery and Jim Crow justice. Some efforts to respond to past injustice have occurred, however. In 2005 a jury of nine whites and three blacks found former Klansman Edgar Ray Killen guilty of manslaughter in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in the deaths of three civil rights workers—Andrew Goodman, James Cheney, and Michael Schwerner—killed in the "Freedom Summer" of 1964. In 2006 both the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly to reauthorize the temporary portions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and President Bush signed a bill renewing the act for another twenty-five years. In 2007, Alabama became the fourth state (after Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina) to pass a resolution apologizing for the state's role in slavery and its effects, although none have offered compensation to victims of slavery's enduring injustices.

Enduring Disparities: Health, Education, and Incarceration

At the beginning of a new century, health disparities between the races are a glaring anomaly in a nation as rich and as advanced in medical research and medical technology as the United States. African Americans, compared to other Americans, have the shortest life expectancies and highest rates of mortality and morbidity for almost all diseases. They are five times more likely than non-black Americans to die from asthma, and both black men and women are far more likely than their white counterparts to die from cardiovascular disease (42 percent more likely for men and 62 percent more likely for women). The prevalence of diabetes is increasing in the U.S. population as a whole; however, blacks are disproportionately affected. They also are 34 percent more likely than whites to die from cancer, the second-leading cause of death in the United States. Blacks born in the United States suffer the poorest health of all Americans, and a study conducted in 2005 found that black immigrants from regions with majority-black populations, such as Africa and the Caribbean, had better health than blacks born in the United States or other majority-white nations. As the work of sociologist Mary Waters has demonstrated, however, the longer that black immigrants from the Caribbean remain in the United States, the more likely they are to develop the same health problems as American-born blacks, probably as a consequence of being drawn into the same set of socioeconomic conditions endured by African Americans.

Socioeconomic Stressors

The reasons why African Americans are such an unhealthy people are complex, but the chief factor may be where blacks live, argues public health authority David Williams. Living in neighborhoods with high densities of impoverished blacks (a form of conflated racial-class segregation), and plagued by environmental pollution, substandard housing, overcrowding, high crime rates, and inadequate schooling, inner-city blacks find themselves susceptible to poor health while simultaneously having limited access to quality health care. Unhealthy environments are responsible for the prevalence of asthma in African American communities. The high cost and relative inaccessibility of healthy foods and the easy availability and affordability of fast food in poor neighborhoods circumscribe the dietary choices of many African Americans, resulting in a diet that is high in fat, sugar, and sodium but low in fruits and fiber. These eating patterns increase the risk of developing heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol, and diabetes, although blacks rarely are actively recruited to participate in clinical trials for medications to treat these conditions.

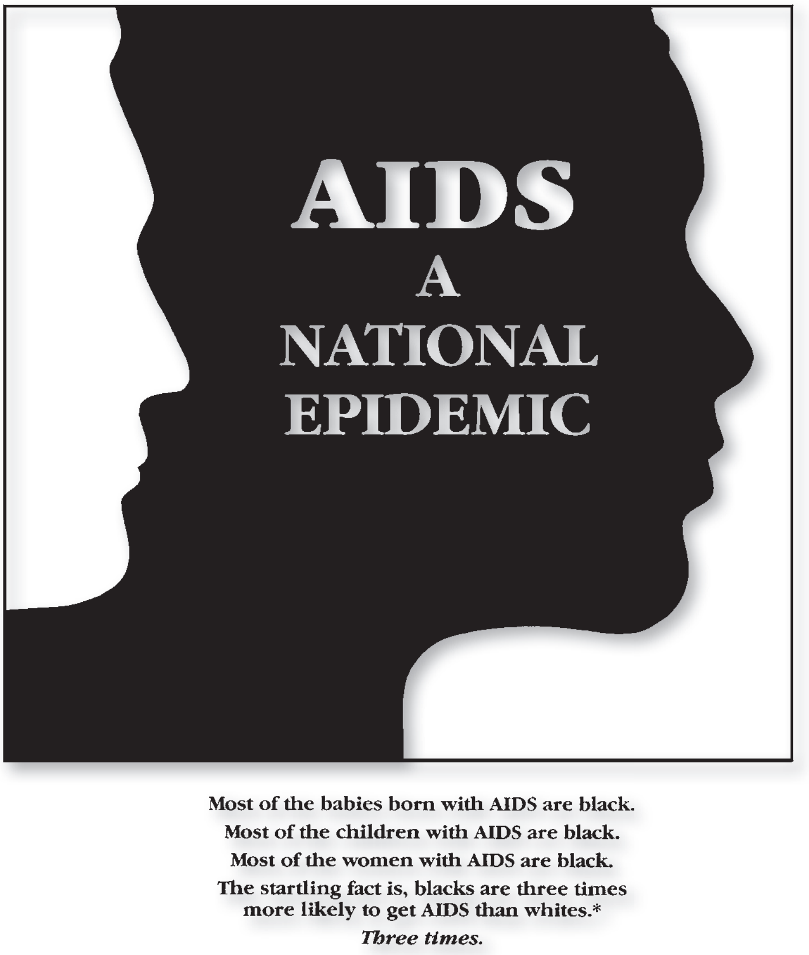
Blacks also have less access than other Americans to private or employment-based health insurance; they are far more likely to be covered by Medicaid or some other publicly funded insurance or to be uninsured. Consequently the cost of medical services deters many from seeking preventive care or medical attention for what they perceive as minor pain or illness. The low level of insurance coverage limits access to prescription drugs and often forces blacks to use overcrowded public hospitals or clinics as their primary source for healthcare. In this environment, low-income blacks fail to develop trusting and long-term relationships with healthcare providers, and many of them, lacking the confidence that they will receive good quality care, become less inclined to seek it.

Inadequate insurance coverage is but one component of a larger cycle of poverty that affects the health of African Americans. Miscommunication and misdiagnosis result from the inadequate education of many inner-city blacks, as well as from healthcare providers' lack of sensitivity and failure to understand the problems of the poor and the immigrants' language and culture. Patients from diverse backgrounds may ask different questions, offer different information about their symptoms, or respond in unanticipated ways to conventional styles of service. Lack of awareness of differing cultural perceptions of illness by healthcare workers inhibits the development of trust between the black community and the healthcare system, which many African Americans already view with suspicion because of such past injustices as the Tuskegee syphilis experiments. The absence of significant numbers of minority doctors and pharmacists exacerbates this problem.

The AIDS Crisis

Without a doubt, HIV/AIDS poses one of the modern world's greatest health threats, especially to African Americans. Although they account for 13 percent of the U.S. population, African Americans are so disproportionately represented among HIV/AIDS cases (50 percent in 2005) that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) speaks of a "health crisis" in the black community. The lack of knowledge about the disease and the corresponding failure to seek treatment have made AIDS a growing killer among black men and women, adults and teens. According to CDC statistics for 2005, the rate of AIDS diagnoses was ten times that for whites and three times that of Hispanics. Black women represent the fastest growing population of newly diagnosed HIV/AIDS cases—resulting for the most part from sexual contact with infected men. In 2009 black women were reported as accounting for 61 percent of all new HIV infections among women, a rate nearly 15 times that of white women, and black teens account for 69 percent of new AIDS cases reported among teens.

Because AIDS has historically been associated with gay white males, many blacks continue to believe that they are not at risk of contracting the HIV virus. Homophobia, in the forms of racial perceptions of masculinity and of antigay messages from the church, has tended to silence discussions of homosexual and bisexual activity as a cause of the disease, despite homosexual activity being the leading cause of HIV transmission among black men. The second-leading cause for black men and women is injection drug use. In recent years, the phenomenon of the "Down Low"—"straight" black men having sex with men and then with female spouses or partners without informing them of their homosexual activities—has contributed to the spread of AIDS among African American women. This behavior is especially relevant to high rates of incarceration for black men, who have unprotected sex with other males in prison. Finally, fear of being tested keeps some African


AIDS
A
NATIONAL
EPIDEMIC
Most of the babies born with AIDS are black.
Most of the children with AIDS are black.
Most of the women with AIDS are black.
The startling fact is, blacks are three times more likely to get AIDS than whites.*
Three times.

AIDS poster

Produced at Howard University, this poster was among the efforts of the African American community to deal with the disease as it reached epidemic proportions.

Americans ignorant of their HIV-positive status and thus results in their unconscious spreading of the disease.

Prevention programs targeted at gay men have not generally proved effective in stopping the spread of AIDS among African Americans, but black political and religious leaders are becoming more aware of the need for AIDS education. Indeed, the early months of the Obama administration focused attention on the impact of the disease on blacks. Thus the White House, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the CDC have launched the Act Against AIDS Leadership Initiative, working with over a dozen national organizations in a five-year prevention and treatment campaign to educate the public.

Incarceration and Education

Racial disparities in incarceration loom as one of the most significant crises facing African Americans in the twenty-first century. Blacks make up 47 percent of the nation's prison population. The overwhelming majority of incarcerated blacks are male, and 40 percent of them are between the ages of seventeen and twenty-seven. Poverty is more closely linked to the higher rates of incarceration for black men than for any other group in the United States. Inadequate education also contributes to high rates of crime in poor black communities, and consequently to higher rates of incarceration.

The majority of federal and state prisoners have no more than a high school education. Victims of school systems with insufficient resources, crowded classrooms, and overworked teachers, only 72 percent of black students graduate from high school. One in four black males is placed in special education or remedial classes, and in major urban areas an average of 45 percent of black males drop out of high school. Black high school dropouts have a 50 percent chance of being incarcerated at some point in their lives. Furthermore, they lack the level of educational attainment that often translates into the kind of regular legal employment that keeps people out of the criminal justice system.

In his recent book *More Than Just Race* (2009), sociologist William Julius Wilson puts in sharp relief the options afforded to racial groups by education. In 2005 college graduates showed relatively little difference in employment rates—88.3 percent for whites, 86.2 for blacks, and 80.2 for Hispanics. Employment potential diminishes considerably, however, as education levels decline. Emphasizing the critical nexus of race, education, and employability, Wilson asserts: "The employment gap between white young men and black young men ages sixteen to twenty-four who were not in school in 2005 was 20 percentage points for high school dropouts, 16 among high school graduates, 8 for those completing one to three years of college, and, as we saw in the earlier example, only 2 for four-year college graduates." Interestingly, black women are far more likely to complete college than black men. Although all racial groups experience higher rates of women college graduates than of men, the difference is most striking among African Americans. Wilson notes that for every 100 black male college graduates in 2003–2004, there were 200 black women graduates.

America's prison population has grown from 200,000 in 1970 to an estimated 2.25 million in 2006, and young minority males account for the bulk of that increase. The crackdown on the use and distribution of illicit substances has targeted such drugs as crack cocaine and marijuana, which are commonly used in poor communities. Arrest for drug possession has resulted in long sentences for poor, black youths convicted of nonviolent drug-related offenses. The drug trade is often seen by inner-city youths with few other economic options as a viable way of making money. Boys as young as seven to ten years old often become involved in drug trafficking as lookouts or carriers and end up in prison by age eighteen.

The American prison system offers little in the way of rehabilitation or job-skills training, and many convicts continue to sell drugs behind bars. Most emerge from prison with few options for legal employment. The taint of a criminal record makes it extremely difficult to find employment or housing, and reentry and work-release programs that could facilitate the transition to life outside prison remain severely underfunded. As black men in poverty become more closely associated with crime, they are more likely to be stereotyped as criminals—a stereotype that has unfortunately and ironically been perpetuated in gangsta rap. Poor blacks are unable to hide illicit drug use inside wealthy gated communities and cannot secure the financial resources to keep themselves and family members out of jail. Compared to whites, however, black men of all economic classes are subjected to closer police surveillance, are more frequently profiled and arrested, and are more likely to be perceived as threats to society.

Forgotten in Hurricane Katrina

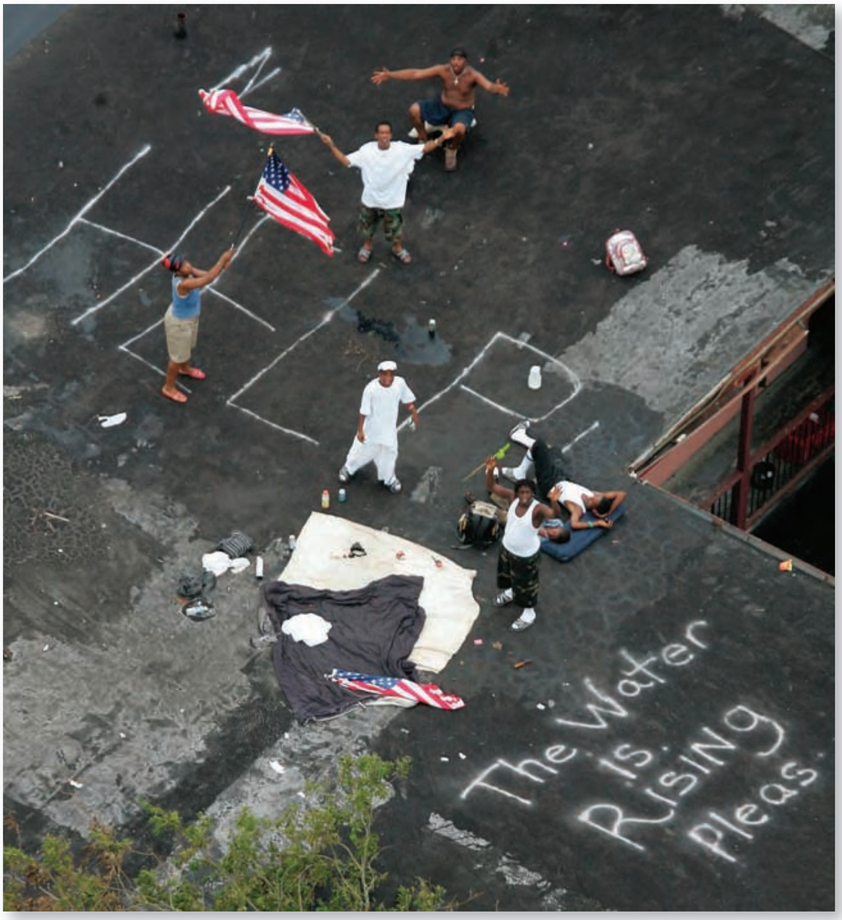
Perhaps nowhere has the connection between race and poverty in America been more pointedly and poignantly highlighted than in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. As the dawn crept over the horizon on August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the southern coast of Louisiana, moving furiously through the city of New Orleans and across parts of Mississippi and Alabama. With 130 mile-per-hour winds, the category-three hurricane ravaged the Gulf Coast, and in its wake homes, businesses, schools, highways, ports, railroads, and water and sewage systems collapsed. More than 1,500 people were killed, and many thousands more were displaced and left homeless. As the levees of the mighty Mississippi River broke, low-lying areas of New Orleans were inundated, bringing untold suffering and frustration to this historic city.

Although the city's black mayor Ray Nagin issued a mandatory evacuation order the morning before Katrina made landfall, New Orleans had no plan in place for mass evacuation, and nearly 100,000 people remained—many of them stranded for days on rooftops and highway overpasses with no food or water. While rescue teams searched for victims by air and water, Mayor Nagin converted New Orleans's sports arena, the Superdome, into a massive homeless shelter. The Superdome, however, was hardly prepared to accommodate 25,000 people for an extended period of time. Lights and plumbing failed, and the inhabitants, many of them elderly and injured, endured heat, filth, hunger, and dehydration for five days before being evacuated.

Despite Mayor Nagin's immediate cries for help from the federal government, a week went by before the National Guard arrived and began mass evacuations. Many of the people affected by Katrina believed that the city, state, and federal responses were too little and came too late. Weeks after Katrina, thousands of people remained unable to return to their homes or to locate family members. In the aftermath of the disaster, many blacks in New Orleans and throughout the nation perceived a racial bias in the federal government's response.

In a study done by *The New York Times* six months after Katrina, black evacuees overwhelmingly reported that they felt abandoned by their nation and city. Indeed, African Americans were more likely than whites to have been displaced and to have lost loved ones during the storm. They were also more likely to have lost their jobs and to lack opportunities to find similar employment. More than two-thirds of blacks disapproved of how federal and state governments responded to Katrina. About half of the blacks interviewed cited race "as a major factor in the government's slow response," and 75 percent of whites saw no racial implications. Many displaced blacks, struggling to return home, also saw racial bias in the allocation of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailers, which allowed families to live near their property while rebuilding. Although FEMA promised 120,000 house trailers to evacuees, only 4,000 were placed in New Orleans.

In 2006 a report issued by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs blamed the lack of adequate planning by the city and state, as well as the slow response of federal rescue initiatives, for the extensive suffering in the weeks following the hurricane. However, in his study of the race and class implications of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, John Logan of Brown University stressed the disproportionate effects of the catastrophe on blacks and the poor—often one and the same population. Since the 1970s, New Orleans has had a black majority, and the median income for white households ($61,000) in the city was more than double that of black households ($25,000).


HELP
The Water Is Rising Pleas

New Orleans residents in aftermath of Hurricane Katrina
The areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina were the city's poor black neighborhoods, such as the Ninth Ward.

The hurricane exacerbated these disparities, and the areas hardest hit by the hurricane were the city's poor black neighborhoods. For example, the predominantly black Lower Ninth Ward was transformed into what one *New York Times* article called an "archipelago of desolation." It was the last ward to reopen after the hurricane, and returning residents found their neighborhood just as the storm had left it—houses moved blocks from their foundations and sidewalks covered with mold and littered with debris. As one elderly resident lamented, returning was "just like going to a funeral." Thus those least able to afford to evacuate were also less likely to be able to rebuild their homes or find new ones after returning to the city.

Black frustration nationwide was fueled by media coverage of the hurricane and its aftermath. News footage showed striking images of blacks waiting on overpasses and rooftops and weeping over lost family members and storm-soaked dreams, but the media focused on the "looting" that occurred after the storm. Government officials vowed to crack down on people raiding stores and supermarkets in the days after Katrina, although many so-called looters sought only food and water. Two photographs from separate sources, the Associated Press (AP) and Getty Images (GI), sparked waves of public protest. The AP photo showed a black man wading through chest-high water holding some food items and bore the caption that the man was "looting a store." The GI photograph depicted a white couple holding bags of food; the caption stated that they had found "bread and soda from a local grocery store."

The racial implications in the language of the captions led Hip Hop artist Kanye West to denounce the entire handling of the crisis. He captured the sentiments of many African Americans when in a live broadcast of a benefit concert he proclaimed, "I hate the way they portray us in the media. . . . . You see a black family, it says they're looting. You see a white family, it says they're looking for food." He went on to incite public outcry by exclaiming, "George Bush doesn't care about black people!"

In January 2006, under increasing pressure from his constituency and shouldering frustration about the slow recovery process, Mayor Ray Nagin proclaimed in a Martin Luther King Day speech that New Orleans would once again be "a chocolate city." His comments elicited outrage from the national media but won the support of his majority-black constituency, who sent in absentee ballots and returned to New Orleans to reelect him. This political victory did not solve the larger inequities exposed by Hurricane Katrina, however. One year later, filmmaker Spike Lee produced a powerful documentary that captured the disquieting reality of the tragedy, uncertainty, and most of all the long-suffering of thousands of people who still awaited answers and solutions.

Hip Hop's Global Generation

The persistence and growth of Hip Hop in the new millennium has defied simple categorization. Like music of earlier generations, Hip Hop serves primarily as a form of entertainment for young artists and their devotees of all races, but it also serves in many places as a vehicle for the critique of social and political realities. Today Hip Hop culture has expanded well beyond black neighborhoods and even the borders of the United States. Hip Hop has been exported to the rest of the world, where it has been imitated, adopted, and adapted by a generation of people in their teens through their early thirties. Rap star Jay-Z and many others now tour in Asia, and Eastern Europe has been the stage of many Hip Hop concerts, including those of 50 Cent, Busta Rhymes, Wu-Tang Clan, Onyx and Lords of the Underground. Teenagers in Western European nations sport Hip Hop gear by G-Unit, and teens in Morocco listen to bootleg Kanye West recordings.

In the 1990s, Islamic or quasi-Islamic motifs in rap videos and lyrics by such African American performers as Q-Tip (Fareed Kamal) and Mos Def. Television began to be heard in the West and in the Arabic-speaking world, and on the Internet; print media have facilitated the distribution of Hip Hop around the globe; and celebrity endorsements have helped to fuel the export of Hip Hop products and clothing lines in what has become an extremely lucrative business. Music commentators note that not since the advent and export of swing jazz in the 1930s has an American music been able to reach so far and reinvent itself so successfully.

Hip Hop Abroad

Hip Hop's global resonance represents more than just the triumph of American consumerism abroad, however. People across the world are using Hip Hop to mobilize social and political movements, to express resistance to political marginalization and racial and economic oppression, and to raise awareness regarding health issues in the fight against HIV/AIDS and in support of preventive vaccines for other diseases that plague populations in Africa. Abroad, as in the United States, Hip Hop assumes two forms, one identified with the commercial record industry and the creation of celebrity icons and

Senegalese rapper Didier Awadi
Awadi, who is part of a politically aware Hip Hop community, has become an international star.

the other the Hip Hop “underground,” which remains an alternative, more locally based voice. Rap overseas has a heterogeneous voice as well, since it grows out of diverse cultures inside and outside the African diaspora.

Societal themes, distinctive sounds, traditional instrumentation, and indigenous voices are all represented by the Hip Hop generation. Its lyrics express local concerns and issues and speak in the many languages of nations and peoples who claim the music as their own. Many international rappers see themselves, as do many American rappers, as commentators and observers of a seldom-seen and largely ignored world where poverty, violence, and despair are prevalent. They also see themselves as critics of their own cultural and political patterns—for example, outdated social practices in Asia, the corruption of certain public officials in Africa, problems related to immigration, citizenship and integration in the various European countries, and the rise of joblessness in many urban areas around the globe.

In South Africa, rap music conveys messages specifically tailored to urban life in Johannesburg and Cape Town, and Israeli rap reflects the daily realities and values of Israeli youth. The West African nation of Senegal has one of the most active Hip Hop scenes in Africa with its indigenous traditions of *tassou,* which is similar to rapping, producing well-known international stars such as MC Solaar, Positive Black Soul, MC Lida, Duggy Tee, Didier Awadi, and Daara J. Xuman. In 2007 the rap song *Sunugaal* by Didier Awadi became an international hit. The song tells about the perilous migration of West African men across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. Senegal has produced a politically oriented Hip Hop community that reflects the tenuous relationship between Senegal and its former colonial power, France, where the sale of rap records tends to run second only to that of the United States.

Hip Hop Nation

Hip Hop as a transnational phenomenon speaks to perceptions of new group formations and allegiances to an art form that has its genesis in American black ghettos. Members of the Hip Hop generation have been known to refer to themselves as part of one global community—the Hip Hop nation—with its own history, signs, codes, and anthems. Touré, an American writer, describes this: "I live in a country no map maker will ever respect. A place with its own language, culture, and history. It is as much a nation as Italy, as Zambia. A place my countrymen call the Hip Hop nation purposefully invoking all the jingoistic pride that nationalists throughout history have leaned on."

During the early stages of the reception and adoption of Hip Hop around the world, the appropriation of black stereotypes, mainly connected to gangsta rap, caused alarm for Hip Hop's critics as well as its more socially conscious followers. The consumption of some of the more negative elements of American rap—hypersexuality, materialism, misogyny, and violence—were distributed and projected to the world. Hip Hop serves as an alternative to traditional "polite" adult culture in Japan, where youths adopt the dress, slang, and dance of American rappers. Writer Ian Condry describes the male-dominated Hip Hop scene there as a fusion of samurai imagery and gangsta rap, performed by self-proclaimed "yellow B-Boys." In Tokyo, rappers utilize the "underground," not only commercial recordings, to critique social and political issues. In India, Hip Hop artists are wildly popular on the radio and in film (Bollywood), blending Hip Hop and Bhangra (a Punjabi folk music and dance). The black American Hip Hop artist Snoop Dogg, noted in a July 2008 *New York Times* article: "Lots of hip-hop tracks sample Indian music, and a lot of their music sounds like it was influenced by hip-hop." An alarming example of Hip Hop's appropriation occured in Sierra Leone during its wars in the 1990s and afterwoard. Rebel leaders used the image of Tupac Shakur to recruit child soldiers some of whom wore Tupac T-shirts.

Remaking American Hip Hop

The political and social issues raised by the global popularization of Hip Hop have led to a growing interest in reorienting the Hip Hop generation in the United States away from its more entertainment and hedonistic focus. For example, linguistic anthropologist Marcyliena Morgan describes in rich detail the underground Hip Hop workshop called Project Blowed, which is part of a community arts organization in the Leimert Park Village section of Los Angeles. Unlike commercial Hip Hop, the workshop encourages black youth to use Hip Hop in the form of freestyle (improvised) MC competitions or "battles." Youths are motivated to prepare and practice in "ciphers"—informal groups that teach skills of rhyming, rapping, and improvising. The winners of the underground battles are those rappers who most impress audiences with their knowledge of pressing community issues—such as gang violence, drugs, racism, and neighborhood revitalization.

Additionally, motivated by a desire to reclaim commercial Hip Hop and to remake it as a more positive reflection of the generation whose experiences it claims to represent, organizers of the Hip Hop and Social Change Conference in 2003 and the National Hip Hop Political Convention in 2004 brought together activists, politicians, and academics to set a political agenda and discuss ways to mobilize young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Ras Baraka, cofounder of the 2004 convention, explained that the purpose of the event was to dispute rap's misogynist and violent images and use the power of Hip Hop to promote the political participation of young people to achieve systematic change. Issues identified as significant for the Hip Hop generation included education, police brutality and the use of racial profiling, health care, housing reform, unemployment, incarceration, and later the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

In 2001, in the aftermath of the voting controversy in Florida, Hip Hop mogul Russell Simmons and former NAACP head Benjamin Chavis launched the Hip Hop Summit Action Network to encourage voter education and registration. In January 2004, Simmons initiated the "One Mind, One Vote" youth voter registration program before the November presidential election of that year. Also in 2004, rapper Sean "P Diddy" Combs inaugurated Citizen Change, a nonprofit organization designed to motivate young Americans to vote by making it fashionable and relevant. Hip Hop celebrities sported Combs's "Vote or Die" shirts, and rappers Kanye West, Jadakiss, and Eminem released politically conscious songs in a throwback to earlier Hip Hop music popularized by legends KRS-1 and Tribe Called Quest.

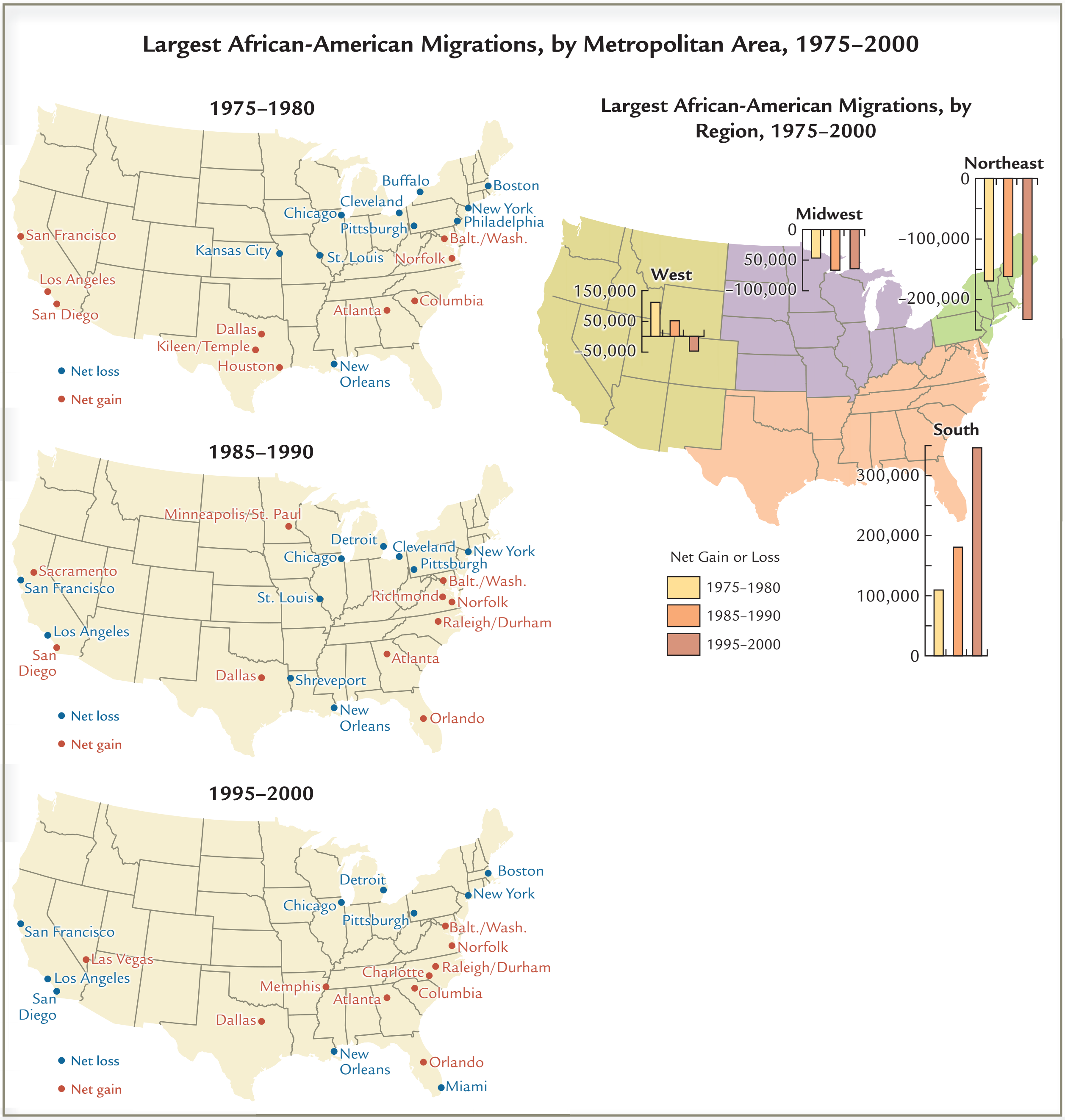
Although in 2004 young people of the Hip Hop generation had difficulty realizing their collective political leverage, the movement to mobilize them remained relevant and grew precipitously with the presidential candidacy of then senator from Illinois, Barack Obama. Indeed, Obama increased youth and young adult interest in politics by utilizing rappers in new roles, specifically giving them an insider role as the cultural ambassadors of his campaign. The endorsement of Hip Hop artists was critical both to getting out young voters during the primaries and to winning their continued commitment to his message of change. Scholar Mark Anthony Neal noted that unlike in the previous election, when rappers organized Hip Hop summits or worked through record-company labels, the Obama Hip Hop supporters turned directly to the new technologies of such Internet and social-networking programs as YouTube and Facebook to get out their messages. Obama received a widely disseminated endorsement from will.i.am, a founding member and front-man for the Hip Hop group Black Eyed Peas, in the form of an online music video. Director and filmmaker Jessie Dylan, son of musician Bob Dylan, collaborated with will.i.am on a music video with music and entertainment celebrities, who rendered into song excerpts from the "Yes We Can" speech that Obama gave after losing the New Hampshire primary. In an interview, will.i.am said Obama's speech "made me reflect on the freedoms I have, going to school where I went to school, and the people that came before Obama like Martin Luther King, presidents like Abraham Lincoln that paved the way for me to be sitting here on ABC News and making a song from Obama's speech."

Rapper Jay-Z's offer to perform in October 2008 was greeted a bit more nervously by the Obama campaign, given some of the lyrics of his songs. Worried that the star would perform *Blue Magic* with its expletives about George Bush, the campaign managers pondered the potential negative effect that Jay-Z might have, but they eventually yielded to a concert in Miami on October 5. In his book on the 2008 presidential campaign, *Newsweek* magazine writer Evan Thomas wrote that Jay-Z omitted the offensive language about Bush, and, more noteworthy that the concert helped to register 10,000 new voters in the city.

New Great Migrations

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, two important demographic trends are redefining America's black population. First is the movement of large numbers of African Americans out of the North, especially the cities of the Northeast, back to the South, reversing a migration trend that had prevailed in the United States for nearly a century. Second is the increasing diversity of the black population within the United States.

Until the 1970s, black migration in the United States followed a relatively stable south-to-north pattern. Beginning in the early 1900s, racism and the mechanization of


Largest African-American Migrations, by Metropolitan Area, 1975–2000
1975–1980
Buffalo
Boston
Cleveland
Chicago
New York
Philadelphia
Pittsburgh
San Francisco
Balt./Wash.
Kansas City
St. Louis
Norfolk
Los Angeles
Columbia
Atlanta
San Diego
Dallas
Kileen/Temple
Houston
New Orleans
Net loss
Net gain
1985–1990
Minneapolis/St. Paul
Detroit
Cleveland
New York
Chicago
Pittsburgh
Sacramento
Balt./Wash.
San Francisco
St. Louis
Richmond
Norfolk
Raleigh/Durham
Los Angeles
San Diego
Atlanta
Dallas
Shreveport
New Orleans
Orlando
Net loss
Net gain
1995–2000
Boston
Detroit
New York
Chicago
Pittsburgh
San Francisco
Balt./Wash.
Norfolk
Las Vegas
Charlotte
Raleigh/Durham
Los Angeles
Memphis
Columbia
San Diego
Atlanta
Dallas
New Orleans
Orlando
Miami
Net loss
Net gain
Largest African-American Migrations, by Region, 1975–2000
Northeast
0
–100,000
–200,000
Midwest
0
50,000
–100,000
West
150,000
50,000
–50,000
South
300,000
200,000
100,000
0
Net Gain or Loss
1975–1980
1985–1990
1995–2000

Largest African American Migrations by Metropolitan Area, 1975–2000

agriculture pushed blacks out of the rural South, and industrialization and the jobs that came with it pulled them toward the cities of the North. By the 1990s and continuing in the first decade of the new century, however, blacks reversed direction and are now moving south in increasing numbers, largely in reaction to northern real estate prices, shrinking job markets, and high costs of living. Middle-class blacks left New York City and

Reverse Migration

Chicago, as well as California and most of the northeastern states, for lower costs of living and housing prices, expanding job markets, and in some cases historic and family ties, all of which pulled many African Americans to the South.

The Northeast and California have experienced the greatest drain, and Georgia, the Carolinas, Florida, and the states of the Upper South have seen the greatest gains. Although New York and Chicago still boast the largest and second-largest black populations in the United States, by 2004 Atlanta had the third-largest black population of any city in the country and the fastest-growing black middle class. Other rapidly growing African American populations were located outside traditionally black regions, in Las Vegas, Phoenix, and Orlando. The new migrants include college-educated blacks seeking greater economic opportunity, as well as retirees and lower-income blacks seeking areas with less expensive living costs and real estate.

The 2000 census counted 36.4 million blacks in the United States, representing about 13 percent of the total population, but America's black population is by no means homogenous. African Americans—blacks whose families have been in the country for generations

Table 23.1 Black Population Growth and Percentage of U.S. Population, 1790–2000

Year	Total Population	Black Population	Percentage
1790	3,929,214	757,181	19.3
1800	5,308,483	1,002,037	18.9
1810	7,239,881	1,377,808	19.0
1820	9,638,453	1,771,656	18.4
1830	12,866,020	2,328,642	18.1
1840	17,169,453	2,873,648	16.1
1850	23,191,876	3,638,808	15.7
1860	31,443,790	4,441,830	14.1
1870	39,818,449	4,880,009	12.7
1880	50,155,783	6,580,793	13.0
1890	62,947,714	7,488,676	11.0
1900	75,994,775	8,833,994	11.6
1910	93,402,151	9,827,763	10.7
1920	105,710,620	10,463,131	9.9
1930	122,775,046	11,891,143	9.7
1940	131,669,275	12,865,518	9.8
1950	150,697,361	15,042,286	10.0
1960	179,323,175	18,871,831	10.5
1970	203,302,031	22,580,289	11.1
1980	226,504,825	26,488,218	11.7
1990	248,710,000	29,986,000	13.2
2000	281,421,906	36,419,434	12.9

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992.* Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992.

and who identify themselves as African American—make up the largest subgroup within the black population, but about one quarter of the increase in the black population over the last decade can be attributed to immigration from Africa and the Caribbean. Although Afro-Caribbeans and Africans constitute relatively small proportions of the total U.S. black population, their numbers are growing much faster than those of the native African American population. These distinctive groups are often lumped together under the umbrella category "black," but significant differences exist among them.

Table 23.2 Growth and Distribution of the African-American Population, by States, in 1940 and 2000

State	1940[a] (in thousands)	2000[b] (in thousands)
Alabama	983	1,156
Alaska	(b)	22
Arizona	15	159
Arkansas	483	419
California	124	2,264
Colorado	12	165
Connecticut	33	310
Delaware	36	151
District of Columbia	187	343
Florida	514	2,335
Georgia	1,085	2,349
Hawaii	(b)	22
Idaho	1	5
Illinois	387	1,877
Indiana	122	510
Iowa	17	62
Kansas	65	154
Kentucky	214	296
Louisiana	849	1,452
Maine	1	7
Maryland	302	1,477
Massachusetts	55	343
Michigan	208	1,413
Minnesota	10	172
Mississippi	1,075	1,034
Missouri	244	629
Montana	1	3
Nebraska	14	69

State	1940[a] (in thousands)	2000[b] (in thousands)
Nevada	1	135
New Hampshire	(b)	9
New Jersey	227	1,142
New Mexico	5	34
New York	571	3,014
North Carolina	981	1,738
North Dakota	(b)	4
Ohio	339	1301
Oklahoma	169	261
Oregon	3	56
Pennsylvania	470	1,225
Rhode Island	11	47
South Carolina	814	1,185
South Dakota	(b)	7
Tennessee	509	933
Texas	924	2,405
Utah	1	18
Vermont	(b)	3
Virginia	661	1,390
Washington	7	190
West Virginia	118	57
Wisconsin	12	304
Wyoming	1	4

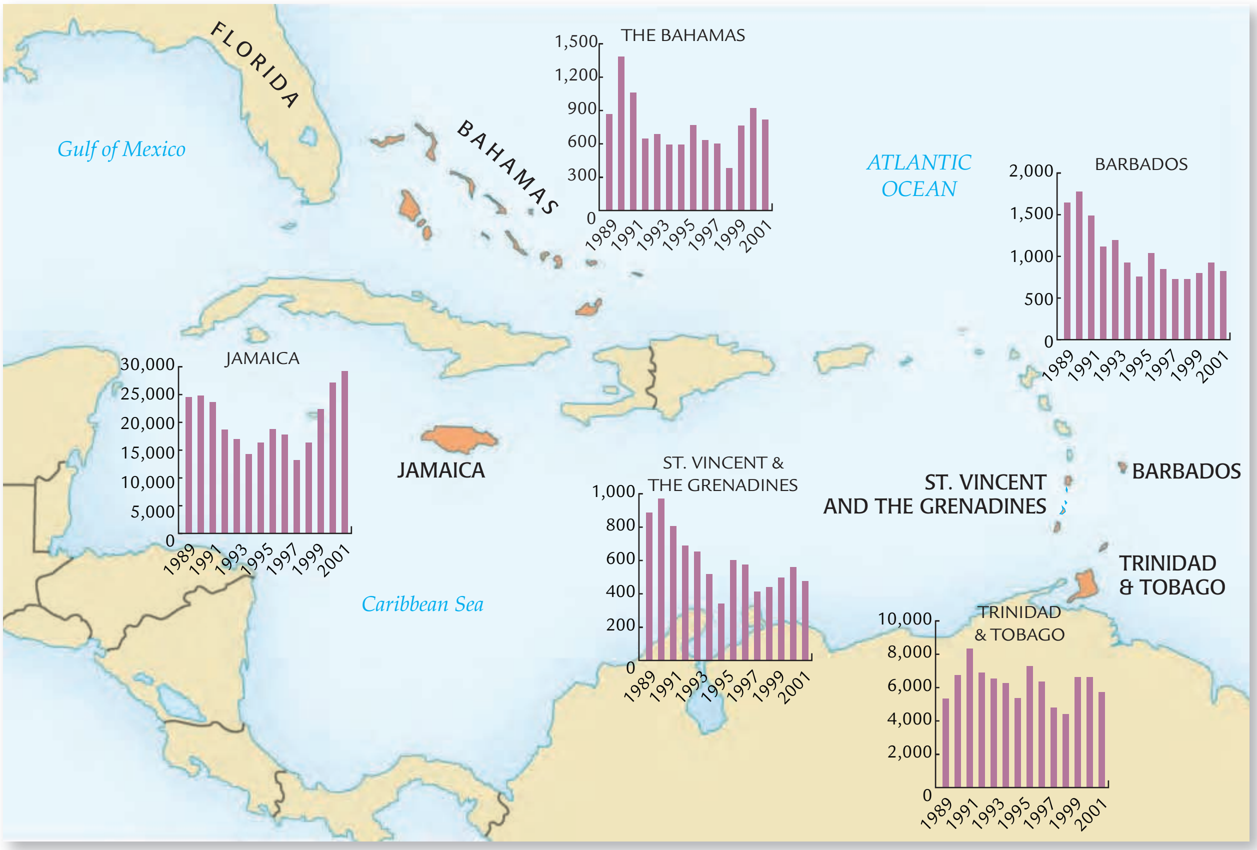
*Less than 500.

[a] 1940 figures include all nonwhites.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970. Part 1. Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1975. U.S. Department of Commerce. Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992. Bureau of the Census. Washington, D.C., 1992. U.S. Department of Commerce, *United States Census 2000.* Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC, 2001.

Afro-Caribbean and African Migrants

Most Afro-Caribbean immigrants come to the United States from Jamaica and Haiti, with smaller numbers immigrating from Trinidad and Tobago, the Bahamas, and Barbados. Although the United States has a growing population of black Hispanics (mostly from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and South America), fewer than 2 percent of American Hispanics identify themselves as black. The greatest numbers of African immigrants come from the sub-Saharan countries of Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Most come to the United States through the Diversity Visa Lottery, established through the Immigration Act of 1990, which offers immigrant visas to high school graduates from nations underrepresented in the United States. The numbers of Africans coming to the United States because of "armed conflict, violence or natural disaster" have decreased in recent decades but still account for a significant number of those from East Africa.


FLORIDA
Gulf of Mexico
BAHAMAS
ATLANTIC OCEAN
THE BAHAMAS
1,500
1,200
900
600
300
0
1989 1991 1993 1995 1997 1999 2001
BARBADOS
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
1989 1991 1993 1995 1997 1999 2001
JAMAICA
30,000
25,000
20,000
15,000
10,000
5,000
0
1989 1991 1993 1995 1997 1999 2001
JAMAICA
Caribbean Sea
ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES
1,000
800
600
400
200
0
1989 1991 1993 1995 1997 1999 2001
ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
BARBADOS
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
TRINIDAD & TOBAGO
10,000
8,000
6,000
4,000
2,000
0
1989 1991 1993 1995 1997 1999 2001

Emigrants from the Caribbean Admitted to the United States, 1989–2002

Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants tend to settle in different parts of the country. Afro-Caribbeans live primarily in metropolitan areas, especially in New York, Florida, Boston, and Atlanta. Although significant numbers of Africans live in New York, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and Boston, they are more likely than African Americans and Caribbeans to settle outside large metropolitan areas in states that have not historically contained large numbers of blacks. For example, Oregon, Minnesota, and Maine have growing Ethiopian and Somali populations. African American, Afro-Caribbean, and African residential areas tend to be relatively isolated from one another; however, because both groups live in large metropolitan areas, African American and Afro-Caribbean communities sometimes overlap. The average African immigrant is more likely to reside in a community where 50 percent of the residents are white.

African immigrants generally have the highest education levels of any blacks in America. Nearly 98 percent of them possess high school degrees, and on average they live in neighborhoods where 30 percent of the residents are college-educated. By comparison, Afro-Caribbeans reside in neighborhoods where only 20 percent of the residents are college-educated, and in African American neighborhoods the presence of college-educated inhabitants drops to 17 percent. Africans arrive in America with roughly three to four years more education than the average Afro-Caribbean immigrant or African American. Both Afro-Caribbean and African immigrants boast greater median incomes than African Americans, a fact that some scholars attribute to their higher educational attainment and also to both immigrant groups' willingness to accept positions in nursing care and other service occupations in which African Americans are not generally employed.

Competing Interests and Ethnic Identities

Black people in the United States can hardly be viewed as a unified body. They have competing interests and conflicting loyalties and ethnic identities. Much of the tension between African Americans and African-descended immigrant groups (Afro-Caribbeans and Africans) centers on issues of employment and social mobility. Sociologists argue that foreign-born blacks coming from majority black countries are "less psychologically handicapped by the stigma of race" than blacks in majority-white countries. Black immigrants report that they experience less discrimination than do African Americans. Mary Waters and other sociologists suggest that this difference in reported discrimination has to do with socialization into the American racial system.

Immigrants have a lower expectation of discrimination, and blacks coming from majority-black countries may be less acutely aware of the structural racism that historically has characterized American society, or they may believe themselves capable of rising in spite of it. African Americans, in contrast, possess a hypersensitivity to racism, born out of their historical experience with it and manifested in a sense of helplessness to combat it. Black immigrants do not attribute failures or difficulties to racial discrimination as often as do African Americans. These behavioral and ideological differences, signaled by differences in speech, can lead white employers to favor foreign-born blacks over African Americans.

These differences have contributed to a sense of hyper-ethnicity among black immigrants, some of whom even try to distance themselves from African Americans by emphasizing their immigrant cultural heritage instead of assimilating American ways. First-generation black immigrants tend to identify themselves by their specific countries of origin (Nigerian or Jamaican, for example, or Nigerian American or Jamaican American) or by their region of origin (West Indian or African) rather than simply as "black." However, to some extent, identification in immigrant populations is situational. West Indian immigrants often identify themselves by country or city of origin among other West Indians, but by geographical region to those outside the group, and racially only if they feel discriminated against or racially categorized.

Scholars note that black immigrants often view African Americans as lazy and racially hypersensitive, while African Americans resent the upward social mobility of immigrants. As University of the District of Columbia Administrator Dr. Bobby Austin explained, African Americans are weary of racial struggle, and "immigration seems like one more hurdle" to overcome . . . "People are asking, 'Will I have to climb over these immigrants to get to my dream? Will my children have to climb?'" Mary Waters's research suggests that much of this disunity decreases over time, however, as the children of immigrants become absorbed into African American culture and become less distinguishable from African Americans. Second- and third-generation immigrants may retain strong cultural ties and ethnic identifications, but they are more willing to align themselves with African Americans or to simply identify themselves as "black" than were their parents or grandparents.

In Search of Origins

Perhaps the newest, although not a literal, migration is the fascinating genetically based journey, via the genetic technology of allele sequencing and analysis of mitochondrial DNA, in search of one's place and group of origin—particularly, for blacks in search of the location and ethnicity of their African ancestry. Genetic testing has offered the opportunity to discern the complexity of their racial make-up as the admixture of multiple races and their constituent ethnic groups. Such testing makes possible an individual African American's genealogical search for ancestral places and persons in many parts of the world, not just in Africa.

Scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research at Harvard University, has been most prominent in calling public attention to the use of genetic testing for the exploration of one's African antecedents. Writing documentary television programs and books, Gates takes famous African Americans—men and women noted in various fields (among them talk-show host Oprah Winfrey, musician Quincy Jones, astronaut Mae Jemison, and surgeon Ben Carson)—on individual journeys back into the South in search of family homes and histories. Led by Gates along a genetically based route, they eventually travel all the way to Africa to meet the specific ethnic group from which descended their captured African forebears who crossed the Middle Passage in chains and became slaves in the New World.

This journey, both genetic and spatial, of present-day African Americans back to Africa in search of their roots is different for each person. The individual stories are both fascinating and moving, since they bring a certain closure and answer to the centuries-old question of African Americans who sought to know the identity of their homeland in Africa, just as European Americans could proudly identify England, Ireland, Germany, Hungary, and many other places of national origin.

Popular American television host Oprah Winfrey was one of the noted African Americans whom Henry Louis, Gates, Jr., took on a journey in search of family roots.

The Politics of Change

In February 2007, the junior senator from Illinois, Barack Hussein Obama, declared his candidacy for the presidency of the United States. Born in Honolulu in 1961, Obama was the son of a white Kansan mother and a black Kenyan father, after whom he was named. Obama was relatively unknown to the American people when he announced his presidential campaign. However, his compelling personal story and meteoric rise would soon end the idea that he was a political rookie. Obama was no novice in the world of politics, having tested his mettle in the rough and tumble South Side neighborhoods of Chicago and in the Illinois state legislature. He worked, at the same time, as a civil rights lawyer and taught a course on constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School. He had skillfully gained the backing of influential white and black leaders. He authored a memoir of his youth, *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and articulated his beliefs and goals for America in *Audacity of Hope* (2006).

Perhaps it was his father's abandonment of his family when Obama was two years old or his early life in Indonesia after his mother's remarriage that shaped his views of a world in need of change. Perhaps it was the temptation and strains of youth culture or his trip to Africa in search of his father, or the recognition of the loving sacrifices of his once-again single-parent mother that instilled in him a passion to make a difference.

This cosmopolitan young man had come to Chicago right after college with the goal of aiding poverty-stricken black communities. Working closely with community residents, ministers, and other leaders, Obama learned the ropes of community mobilization in the fight against joblessness, inferior schools, and indifferent elected representatives. After three years of community organizing, he decided to go to Harvard Law School to refine his advocacy skills. With fine credentials (he would be elected president of the prestigious *Harvard Law Review*), he returned to Chicago after law school, determined to shake up the status quo.

Obama's ascent was impressive, elected first to the Illinois Senate and later to the United States Senate. In August 2004 in Boston, he made his debut before the American people as the keynote speaker at the Democratic National Convention. His eloquence, good looks, and influential supporters secured him a fleeting and exhilarating moment in the national spotlight. At the time, his eyes were set on the United States Senate, and his well-received speech bolstered his popularity and positioned him as the strongest Democratic contender in Illinois. He won his Senate race, becoming in 2005 only the fifth African American United States Senator in history. (Between 1993 and 1999, Carol Mosely Braun, also from Illinois, had served in the Senate—the only black woman ever elected to this august body.)

AMERICA 2004

Barack Obama addressing delegates at the Democratic National Convention, 2004

A New Campaign Style

By the opening of 2007, a restless Senator Obama was pondering a run for the presidency, and on February 10, 2007, he stood in front of the Illinois statehouse in Springfield and announced his decision to enter his party's presidential campaign. Obama fashioned himself as a new-style leader, thus portraying himself as an outsider by distancing his position on the Iraq War and on domestic issues from that of President George W. Bush and even from many in his own Democratic Party. From the inception of the Iraq War, Obama opposed American involvement, which placed his views in direct opposition to those of prominent black officials in the Bush administration—Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice. His announcement speech in Springfield reiterated that opposition, while also emphasizing his goals of working for better schools, jobs, and healthcare; of making America more energy efficient and protecting the environment from global warming; and of "taking up the unfinished business of perfecting our union, and building a better America." Obama's presidential campaign for "change," conveyed a broad sense of inclusiveness and his desire to represent all the American people.

Obama was not the first black person to run in the presidential campaigns of the major political parties. Shirley Chisolm, a seven-term congresswoman from New York, had campaigned for the Democratic nomination in 1972, and civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson had done so in both 1984 and 1988. In 1996 and 2000, Republican Alan Keyes ran for the presidential nomination, and in 2000 both Carol Mosely Braun and the civil rights activist Rev. Al Sharpton competed in the Democratic Party's debates and primaries. Nor was

Window in Time

Senator Barack Obama Enters the Presidential Race

It was here, in Springfield, where North, South, East, and West come together that I was reminded of the essential decency of the American people—where I came to believe that through this decency, we can build a more hopeful America. And that is why, in the shadow of the Old State Capitol, where Lincoln once called on a divided house to stand together, where common hopes and common dreams still, I stand before you today to announce my candidacy for President of the United States. I recognize there is a certain presumptuousness—a certain audacity—to this announcement. I know I haven't spent a lot of time learning the ways of Washington. But I've been there long enough to know that the ways of Washington must change.

The genius of our founders is that they designed a system of government that can be changed. And we should take heart, because we've changed this country before. . . . Each and every time, a new generation has risen up and done what's needed to be done. Today we are called once more—and it is time for our generation to answer that call. For that is our unyielding faith—that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it. . . .

But Washington has a long way to go. And it won't be easy. That's why we'll have to set priorities. We'll have to make hard choices. And although government will play a crucial role in bringing about the changes we need, more money and programs alone will not get us where we need to go. Each of us, in our own lives, will have to accept responsibility—for instilling an ethic of achievement in our children, for adapting to a more competitive economy, for strengthening our communities, and sharing some measure of sacrifice. So let us begin. Let us begin this hard work together. Let us transform this nation.

Excerpts from Senator Barack Obama's Announcement of his Candidacy Springfield, Illinois, February 10, 2007.

Obama the first African American politician to gain visible media and popular attention. Yet, as a sitting member of the United States Senate, he received heightened attention and a heightened degree of political legitimacy—more than his predecessors. Never before did an African American appear to be taken so seriously as a candidate by his political rivals, the press, and campaign fundraisers.

The central premise of his campaign message was that change began at the grassroots level. One of the most unique aspects of the Obama strategy was the ability to bring in young people and use them as an integral part of the campaign. "Camp Obama"—a three-to-four day training session, with about fifty volunteers in each weekly session, was initially conducted at a volunteer headquarters set up in Chicago and soon was replicated in such key election states as Georgia, Texas, and Florida. Most of the volunteers were young adults and college students who applied for the limited spots and, if selected, paid for their own housing and transportation to receive the free training.

Through the training camps, Obama sought to use young adults in a precinct-by-precinct volunteer-driven field operation. In a memo written on August 29, 2007, entitled "Camp Obama: Turning Enthusiasm into Organization," Temo Figueroa, the Obama campaign's National Field Director, summed up the early state victory strategy: "It is about a new campaign focused on exploiting the 'enthusiasm gap.' "

Obama's field operation incorporated storytelling and relationship-building as central to its organizing. Trainees were taught how to manage phone banks, knock on doors in a systematic fashion, and register voters. This grassroots strategy revolutionized organizing in the field and transformed thousands of communities. Obama was also aided by the advice and lessons of his friend and fellow-lawyer Deval Patrick in Massachusetts, whose grassroots gubernatorial campaign with its "Yes, We Can" slogan (the Obama campaign would adopt it) appealed to white voters throughout the state, thus winning the election for Patrick in 2006 and making him the commonwealth's first black governor.

Key to the Obama campaign was its use of the Internet to mobilize support. For younger volunteers, social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace served as a virtual space where volunteers accessed tools to train themselves and others on organizing tactics, thereby creating teams of "netroots" organizers who in turn recruited other volunteers. Students for Barack Obama, which started as a group on Facebook and eventually became an official youth outreach operation for the Obama campaign, recruited students online and organized Obama events across college campuses.

According to Chris Hughes, the twenty-five year-old cofounder of Facebook and the coordinator of online organizing for the Obama Campaign, the campaign's own social networking site, My.barackobama.com, allowed supporters to create over 35,000 local organizing groups and host over 200,000 events. The campaign's digital strategy incorporated such technology as online videos and ads, emails, and text messaging to effectively build his brand of change. The World Wide Web gave thousands of volunteers the opportunity to spread Obama's message of change in ways that would transform the nature of the political campaign process.

The Democratic Primaries

The Democratic primaries increasingly became a match-up between Senator Obama and his fiercest rival, New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. Obama's coalition included African Americans, college-educated whites, and young voters; Clinton's coalition rested primarily on women, Latinos, and non-college-educated whites. However, in the earlier months of the campaign, particularly in the fall 2007, polls showed Clinton with a larger following of black voters. Blacks' loyalty to the Clintons (both Bill and Hillary) waned as the Democratic primaries progressed. These formidable alliances were evident in national polls and in each state where Obama and Clinton fought vigorously to win the Democratic nomination. The strength of Obama's coalition over Clinton's, however, was reinforced on February 5, 2008, called Super Tuesday, when twenty-three states held simultaneous Democratic primaries and caucuses. Obama emerged as the victor, picking up thirteen states to Clinton's ten states and winning more pledged delegates (847 to 834).

Certainly one of the most dramatic moments in the campaign was the exposé that Obama's pastor, the AME minister Jeremiah Wright, had used inflammatory and unpatriotic statements in a sermon. The media's suffocating coverage might have ended Obama's campaign had he not decided to confront the divisive publicity directly. Obama took the occasion to speak about not only about Jeremiah Wright's remarks but more importantly also about the larger issue of race in America. It was a brilliant decision. On March 18, 2009, in heartfelt words, Obama addressed white and black Americans. He did not shy away from a discussion of real racial disparities in education, the penal system, and employment, and he called for the enforcement of civil rights laws, for "ladders of opportunities," for better education, and for a more just system. At the same time, he told blacks to free their minds and behaviors of the "legacy of defeat," to become more caring and attentive parents, and to believe that they have the power to change their destiny. At the end, he spoke to all his compatriots, asserting that "It requires all Americans to realize that your dreams do not have to come at the expense of my dreams; that investing in the health, welfare, and education of black and brown and white children will ultimately help all of America prosper."

The Election

Despite all the controversy, Barack Obama won the nomination and then in the general election triumphed over Republican John McCain, winning 365 to McCain's 173 electoral votes. The popular vote was even more symbolically impressive—63 million (53 percent) to 55.8 million (46 percent)—since it was the first time that a Democrat had won more than 51 percent since Lyndon Johnson's victory in 1964. CNN's senior political analyst, the former presidential advisor David Gergen, said that the election was "the passing of an old order"—referring to the future possibility of a new coalition of Latino, black, and young (ages 18–29) voters. Ninety percent of McCain voters were white. Obama won key battleground states that had gone Republican in 2004: Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia (which had last voted for a Democratic president in 1964), Iowa, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada (all of which were in the Bush column in 2004), Indiana (which, like Virginia, had not voted for a Democrat since Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964), and North Carolina.

Obama not only won the Hispanic vote but also increased the Hispanic turnout in 19 states—Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. (All those states except Missouri, Montana, North and South Dakota, and West Virginia he carried.)

Economic concerns, spurred by news of the failing economy and home foreclosures, factored significantly in turning previously undecided voters toward Obama. While young adults voted for Obama in overwhelming numbers (66 percent, versus 31 percent for McCain), the actual youth percentage of the overall electorate was 18 percent—only one percentage point more than in 2004. Yet young voters played a tremendous role in get-out-the-vote efforts. Their votes were most influential to Obama's victory in Indiana and North Carolina. One of the most electrifying aspects of the campaign was the noticeable addition of new voters in the electorate. One in ten persons voted for the first time in 2008, and they voted for Obama by 69 percent to 30 percent. Two-thirds of these new voters were aged 30 or under, 20 percent were black, and 18 percent were Hispanic.

On January 20, 2009, Barack Hussein Obama was inaugurated as the forty-fourth president of the United States. Several million people of all races converged on Washington, D.C., to witness this historic event. For the vast majority of those standing in the cold winter chill of Inauguration Day, the sight of a black president of the United States and a black

First Lady, Michelle Obama, would once have been inconceivable. They may have also watched the president's swearing in, while simultaneously marveling at the idea of a black First Family as the occupants of the White House. The elderly may have recalled that in their own lifetime—in years not so distant—African Americans in the nation's capital could not be served as equals in the cafeterias of federal buildings, or enter department store dressing rooms, or eat at drugstore lunch counters.

Some might have even remembered the student volunteers of all races, who traveled courageously into the Deep South in 1964 and risked or even lost their lives to register African Americans as voters; and they might have compared them to the young volunteers who traveled enthusiastically to cities and hamlets throughout America in 2008 to mobilize voters for the Obama platform for "change." As the Inauguration ended and the crowds dispersed, all knew they had witnessed history in the making and that a new chapter had just begun.