

BUILDING BLOCK INQUIRY C3 TEACHERS

What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?

C3 Framework Standard	D2.His.6.9-12. Analyze the ways in which the perspectives of those writing history shaped the history that they produced.
C3 Teachers Topic, Concept & Skill	★ Era 6: Change ★ Historical Memory ★ Argument

The Great Migration reshaped not only African American life but also the cultural fabric of the entire United States, laying the groundwork for greater visibility, recognition, and influence of Black culture. This inquiry will provide experiences for students to analyze the movement of African Americans from 1890 to 1960 to understand the scale and scope of change in the United States as African Americans left the South.

Featured Sources

Source Set A: Experiences of the Great Migration, 1890-1917
Source Set B: Experiences of the Great Migration, 1919-1941
Source Set C: Experiences of the Great Migration, 1942-1960

Formative Performance Tasks

COLLABORATE	Create a list of the changes sought or experienced during the Great Migration. Organize the sources under a set of student-created themes.
DELIBERATE	Evaluate a set of sample claims and determine which is the best response to the compelling question.
PRODUCE	Complete a response to the compelling question by supporting the selected claim with evidence and reasoning.

Teacher Guidance

Class begins with students working in pairs to examine one of three [Source Sets](#) as they list the changes sought or experienced by African Americans during the Great Migration. Then, students will merge into groups of 6 as they discuss and compare the changes between each set of sources, spanning decades.

Students then work in their groups to evaluate a [set of pre-made claims](#). They will discuss which would serve as the best response to the compelling question, “What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?”

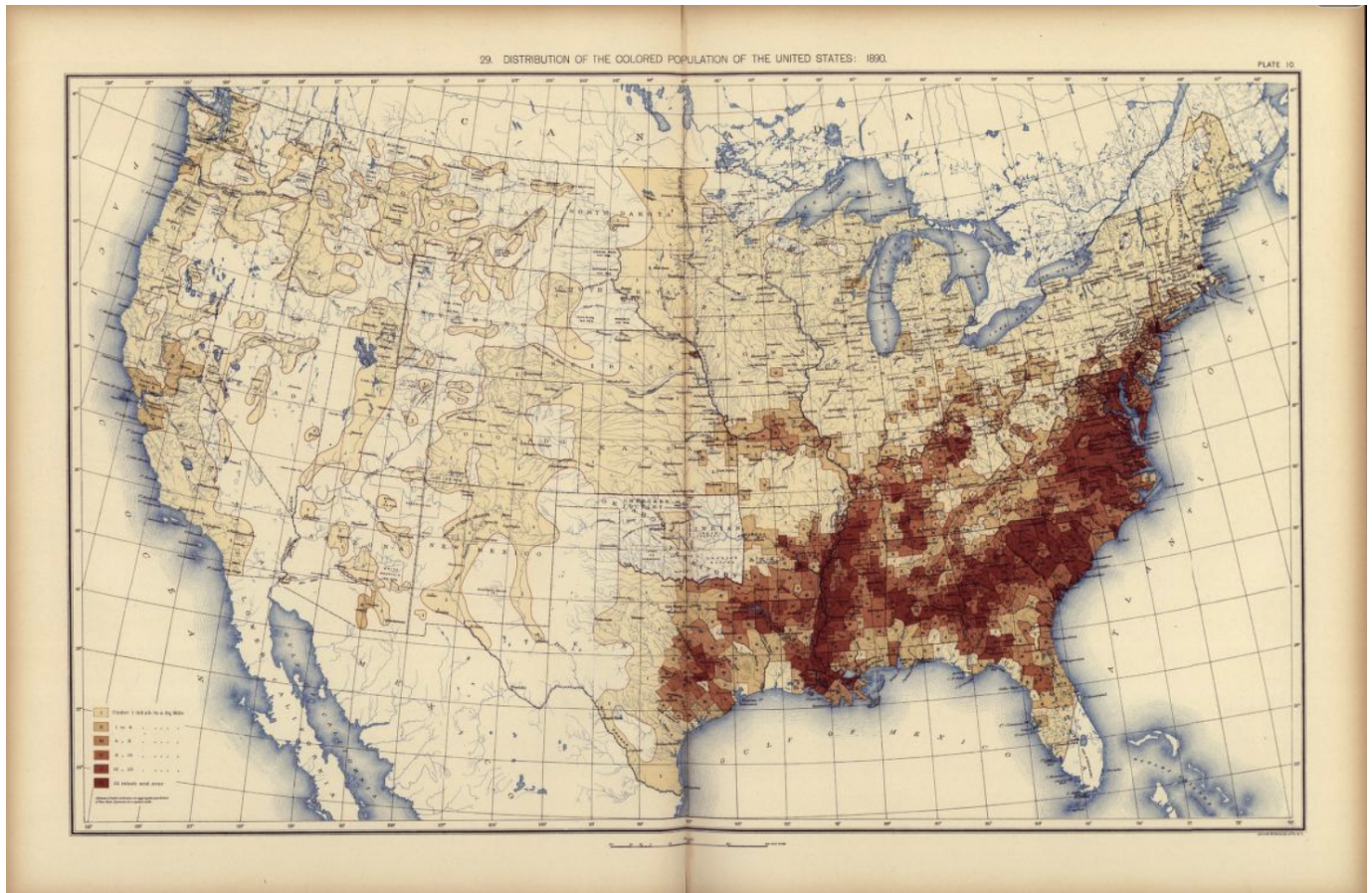
Next, students write in their selected claim or may choose to craft their own as a group. They will use the sources examined previously to complete a [graphic organizer](#), supporting their claim with evidence and connecting their ideas with clear reasoning.

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Source Set A: 1890-1917 - [Colored population of the United States: 1890](#)

Distribution of African American Population: 1890



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701gm.gct00010/?sp=26&r=-0.272,-0.037,1.535,0.745,0>

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Source Set A: 1890-1917 - ["Big Bill" Broonzy describes his move from Arkansas to Chicago](#)

Bill Broonzy describes what motivated him before moving to Chicago around 1919.

BILL: Well I-s- the main reason that I lef' from home because I couldn' stand the -uh-
-the way that the white man had been treatin' me. I was jus' ^{dumb} ~~stupid~~ to a fac! I thought
't was the right way to be treated. An' then when I found out that it was the wrong way
I jus' wouldn' take that no more, see?

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https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc2004004.ms090459/?sp=14&__cf_chl_f_tk=EpSICX6xfn8KorQ1U7lqF7yakoh7zpMPI9Fda86xm6U-1782998427-1.0.1.1-JfXhyFFUvvrOfHGNDnkr9PbqBkbleE2.7gjX.qK638&r=-0.015,0.543,1.064,0.635,0

What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?

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Source Set A: 1890-1917 - "[South Unable to Put Stop to Negro Exodus,](#)" [The Washington Times \(1916\)](#), *Library of Congress*



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84026749/1916-10-23/ed-1/?sp=1&r=-0.052,-0.176,1.002,0.598,0>

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Source Set A: 1890-1917 - [Interview with Arthur Goodlett about his migration from Alabama to Omaha \(1917\)](#), Library of Congress

Arthur Goodlet describes what motivated him and his wife to move from Century, Alabama to Omaha, Nebraska.

....

a nearby small town, Century Alabama. It was while living in this town that I read of Omaha, Nebraska and the opportunities for Negroes in the packing industry. This information about Omaha was in the Florida Sentinel, a Negro paper that I was taking at the time. The Sentinel said that further information could be obtained by writing the Monitor, a Negro paper

....

We left Brewton on March 10th, 1917, and arrived in Omaha on March 13th. We went directly to Father Williams' parish and he with George Parker talked with us for several hours, discussing Omaha and the possibilities that it offered for employment to a group of Negroes. We had decided that if Omaha did not seem the right spot to stop we would continue to Sioux City, Iowa, as there were several packing companies there also. They

....

It is estimated that over 300 came to Omaha from Brewton during the year 1917, and the majority entered the packing industry. Between the years 1917 and 1921 it is safe to say that over 1,000 Negroes came to Omaha from Brewton and surrounding territory. The majority of these Negroes came here seeking educational opportunity as well as industrial, and decided to stay here as they were quite satisfied by both. Most of them started to buy homes and began to spread out into various districts

Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh000831/>

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Source Set A: 1890-1917 - ["The Charge," editorial in the Denver Star \(1917\)](#), *Library of Congress*

Founded in 1888 and published in Denver, the Statesman was a weekly paper that served the African American community in Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, and New Mexico. The paper acted as a channel through which its readers could "voice their opinions, assert their rights, and demand their due recognition." ([Library of Congress, Chronicling America](#))

Our white neighbors may as well understand it once for all, that nothing in the world will satisfy the Negro and stop this mighty tide of migration but equal and exact justice. The slogan is "liberty," and when our white neighbors, as does Mr. Cravens, attribute the Negro migration to such trivial things as boll weevil and lack of support by white farmers, they deceive themselves. The Negro wants to go where he can get liberty; where he can get better schools, better wages, better school facilities, better political opportunities and better protection of life. That is the main reason the Negro is going North.

Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84025887/1917-02-03/ed-1/?sp=1&r=0.132,0.558,0.432,0.243,0>

What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?

Featured Source

Source Set B: 1919-1941 - ["Extra Patrols, Closed Streets Are Ordered to Check Rioting." The Washington Times \(1919\), Library of Congress](#)



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn84026749/1919-07-22/ed-1/?sp=1&r=-0.312,0.019,1.696,0.954,0>

What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?

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Source Set B: 1919-1941 - [Newspaper coverage of the violence of Red Summer \(1919\), Library of Congress](#)

The Chicago Whip was a weekly newspaper that ran from 1919 until around 1939. William C. Linton was its founding editor and publisher. He was born near Atlanta, Georgia and was the son of Reverend T. J. Linton, a minister with the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Whip's focus on political and economic concerns is noted as reflecting shifts in African American urban life in the 1920s. ([Library of Congress, Chronicling America](#))

Make America and "Democracy" Safe for the Negro

The CHICAGO WHIP
THE BAWN OF A NEW DAY
A PAPER WITH A POLICY

Vol. 1. No. 8 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS, AUGUST 15, 1919 PRICE FIVE CENTS

RIOT VICTIMS TO SUE CITY

White and Colored Ministers Join The Whip in Fight Against Segregation

The Rev. W. R. Fleming, in a sermon at the Zion Methodist Episcopal Church, said: "When the white church people of this country take the stand that the Negro is a man and must have a man's treatment, when we not only talk but live the brotherhood of man, then and only then will race riots cease."

Racial hate, when back to the slave driver's lash, L. E. Stewart, pastor of the Quinn C. I. A. M. E. Church, East Twenty-fourth and South Walsh avenues, said in his sermon Sunday, his subject being race riots.

The preacher said a race has made such progress as the white Negro, he has, he stated, such rapid strides.

W. Johnson Tells Facts Concerning Recent Riots in Washington

Washington papers failed to tell acts of whites committed since his liberation from 280 years of slavery.

"He has not struck at this nation with the hand of an assassin. He only asks the fair-minded people of this land for justice, not for sympathy."

"Many ministers have counselled because of race hatred and religious bigotry," said Rev. Dr. T. F. Donahue in a sermon Sunday at the Rogers Park Lutheran Church. Using as a subject the massacre of Jews contemplated in the days of Queen Esther, Dr. Donahue said:

"The effort to segregate the victims from the victims has proved an utter failure. It is the Lord's will that the rich should love beside the poor, to help the poor. In His house the rich and poor are to meet together. His people are the salt of the earth. His plan to save this world is to mix the good with the bad to leaven the lump."

APOLOGIES IN ORDER

The Joint Emergency Committee, composed of representatives of the Urban League, the Multiracial Workers Citizens Conference, Y. M. C. A., the Cook County Bar Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, urge all persons who suffered the loss of any real or personal property during the rioting through the depredations of mobs to immediately make a full report, if they have not already done so, to the temporary headquarters of the committee at Oliver Baptist Church, Thirty-first and South Park avenue. The laws of the State of Illinois provide that whenever any "building or other real or personal property . . . shall be destroyed or consequential of any mob or riot com-

Hundreds To File Suits For Losses Sustained During Recent Riots

posed of twelve or more persons, the city shall be liable . . . for three-fourths of the damage sustained." The law also provides that no damages shall be allowed unless a notice of the claim is filed within thirty days after the damage or loss occurs. The Joint Emergency Committee therefore urges that any person or persons who suffered any loss of property, whether of buildings destroyed, places of business or houses destroyed or damaged, household goods damaged or destroyed, or, in short, any loss whatever, shall immediately call at Oliver Baptist Church and present the facts regarding such loss so that the claim for damages may be filed within the prescribed time limit. If you fail to do this until after thirty days have expired, no chance of securing any damages will exist. All of the necessary details must be given—a detailed list of articles destroyed, a fair valuation of each, all facts regarding the person doing the damage, the names of persons accompanying the mob that did it, damage, and all other circumstances affecting the case. No charge is made for filing such claims and two lawyers are in the office from 9 A. M. to 4 P. M. to prepare them.

Colored Musicians Form National Organization

Constructive Work to Be Started

At the Wabash Avenue Y. M. C. A. on July 26th to 27th, a meeting was held.

U. S. TO ACT ON DISCRIMINATION SHOWN ABYSSINIAN PRINCE

Trial of Camp Grant

Col. Young to Return to Keokuk

Rockford, Ill., Aug. 15.—The trial of the fourteen colored men at Camp Grant, which lasted two months, and

DINING CAR CHIEF CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS

Had Enough Food to Keep Family a Week

Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/sn86056950/1919-08-15/ed-1/?sp=1&q=Race+Riots&st=pdf&r=-0.173,-0.067,1.346,1.346,0>

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Source Set B: 1919-1941 - [Harlem Rent Parties \(1938\)](#), *Library of Congress*

During the early nineteen twenties it is estimated that more than 200,000 Negroes migrated to Harlem: West Indians, Africans and American Negroes from the cotton fields and cane brakes of the Deep South. They were all segregated in a small section of Manhattan about fifty blocks long and seven or eight blocks wide; an area teeming with life and activity. Housing experts have estimated that, sometimes, as many as five to seven thousand people have been known to live in a single block.

A four or five room apartment was (and still is) often crowded to capacity with roomers. In many instances, two entire families occupy space intended for only one. When bedtime comes, there is the feverish activity of moving furniture about, making down cots or preparing floor-space as sleeping quarters. The same practice of overcrowding is followed by owners or leasees of private houses. Large rooms are converted into two or three small ones by the simple process of strategically placing beaverboard partitions. These same cubby holes are rented at the price of full sized rooms.

Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/wpalh001365/>

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Source Set B: 1919-1941 - [Trolley car conductors in Philadelphia \(1940\)](#), *Library of Congress*



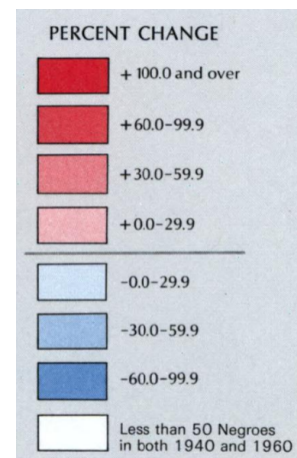
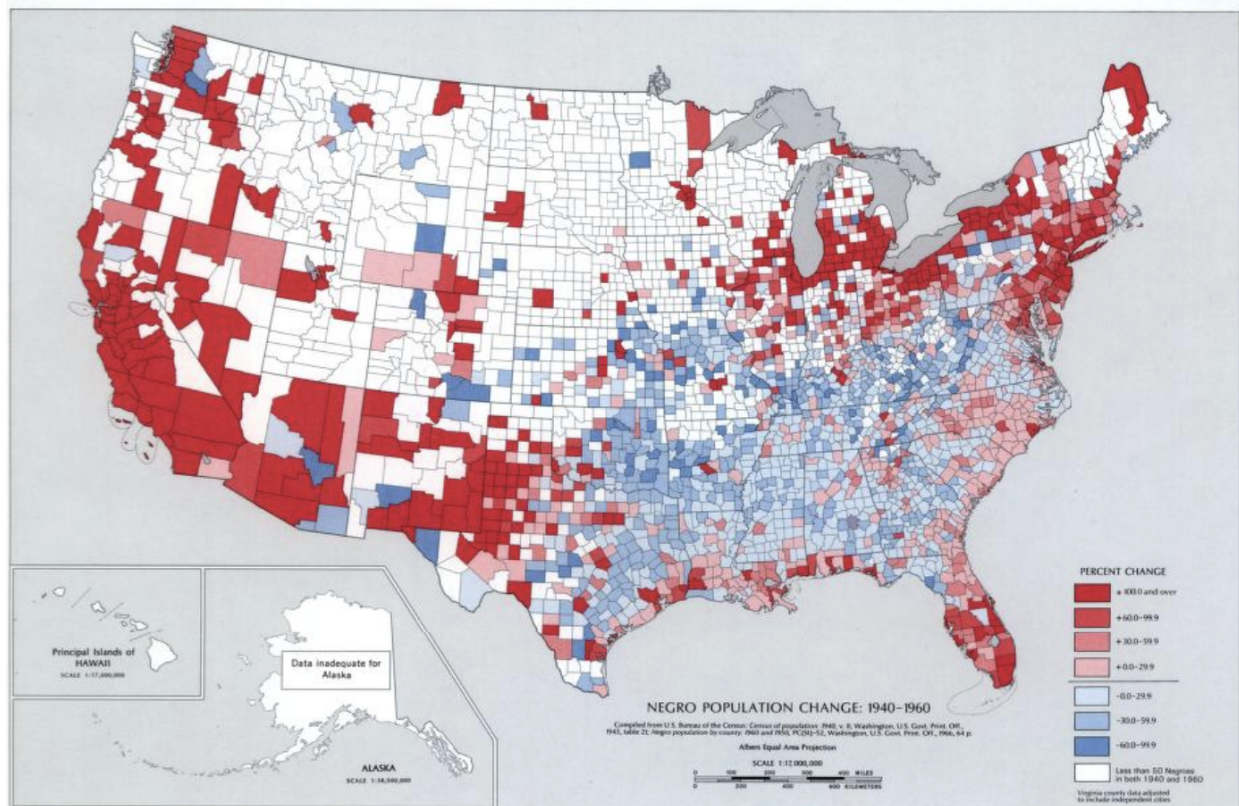
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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Population Change, 1940-1960](#), Library of Congress

African American Population Change: 1940-1960



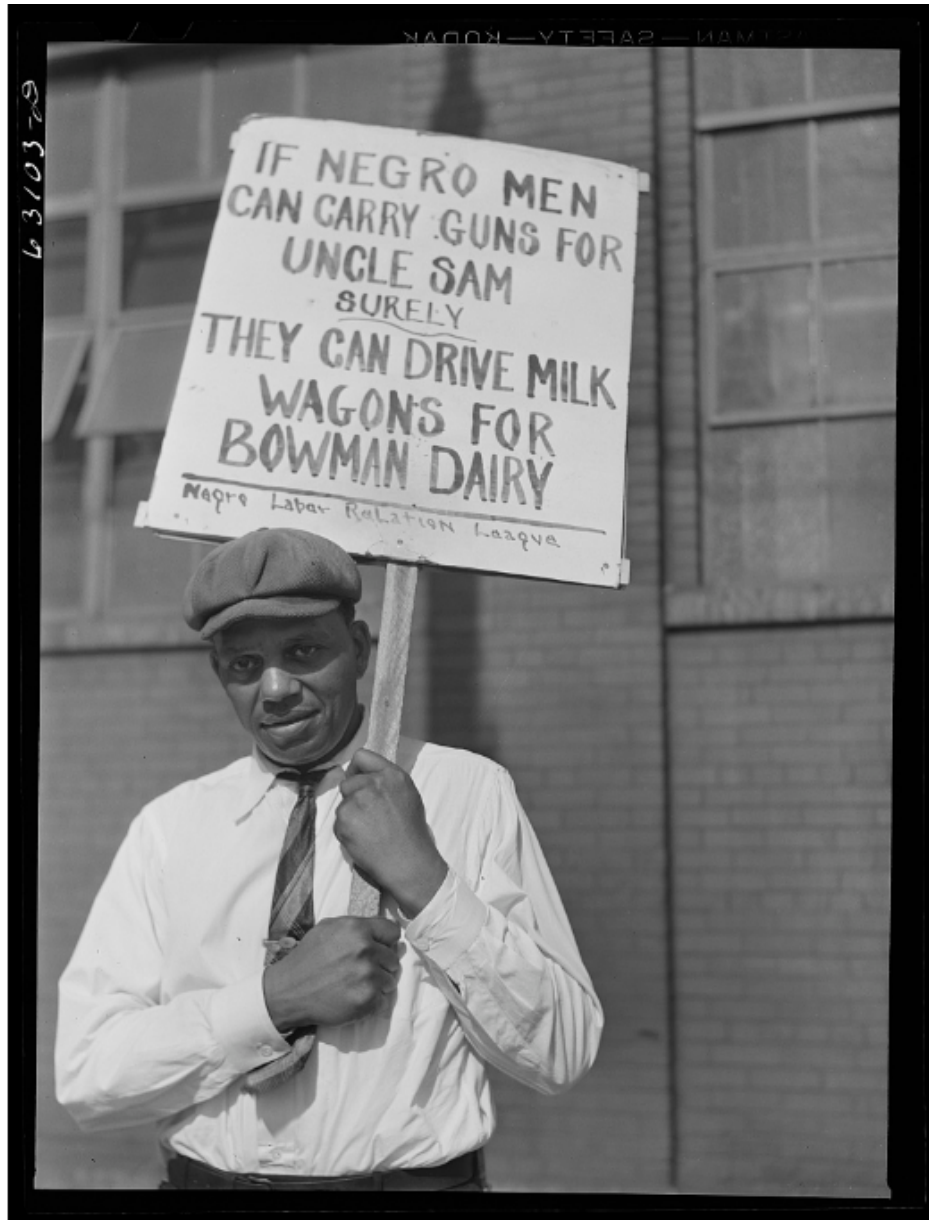
Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress:

<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3701gm.gct00013/?sp=191&q=census&r=-0.129,-0.083,1.362,0.661,0>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Man carrying sign in front of milk company, Chicago \(1941\)](#), Library of Congress



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8c19566/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Detroit, Michigan. Looking over slum houses. These are conditions under which families originally lived before moving to the Sojourner Truth housing project, 1942, Library of Congress](#)



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8d25368/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Sign opposite the Sojourner Truth Homes housing project in Detroit \(1942\)](#), Library of Congress



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017844754/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Some of the Boy Scouts who meet in the community center of the Ida B. Wells Housing Project. Chicago, Illinois](#) (1942), *Library of Congress*



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8d02612/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Jewel Mazique working in the stacks of the Library of Congress \(1942\)](#), Library of Congress



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8d02847/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - [Two women working in an aviation plant in Inglewood, California \(1942\)](#), Library of Congress



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/fsa.8b05132/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - Newsreel coverage of the Chicago Defender's Bud Billiken parade, 1945 (begins at 0:30), *Library of Congress*

"All-American News" were the first newsreels produced for a black audience. Made in the 1940s and 1950s, they were originally intended to encourage black Americans to participate in, and support the war effort, and to reflect an African-American perspective on world and national events. Highlights of this issue include segments about the 16th annual Bud Billiken Day celebration in Chicago, on August 11, 1945, and American troops landing in Manila, Philippines in August, 1945.



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2018600165/>

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Source Set C: 1942-1960 - ["A Time for Freedom": Newsreel coverage of the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom](https://www.loc.gov/item/2024601014/), Library of Congress

This documentary features footage from the "Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom," a civil rights demonstration at the Lincoln Memorial on May 17, 1957. It also includes interviews with attendees, and scenes from the Montgomery bus boycott, Harlem, New York, and segregated areas in the South.



Public domain. Available at the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/item/2024601014/>

Claims: What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?

The Great Migration demonstrates that social progress is an incremental process rather than a sudden revolution.

Moving geographic locations does not automatically guarantee immediate change.

Progress and change are frequently met with friction, backlash, and conflict.

While institutional changes are often slow, resilient communities can create immediate safe spaces.

While the Great Migration offered economic opportunity, it also revealed that race-based violence and oppression were national continuities rather than isolated regional issues.

Over the course of the Great Migration, Black resistance changed from informal, everyday survival to highly visible political activism.

Different groups experience and drive change in distinct ways.

The Great Migration transformed African Americans from a primarily rural southern population into a dominant force in urban American culture.

Lasting change requires a shift from individual actions to organized, institutional power.

Economic opportunities for marginalized groups are often influenced by a constant desire for economic mobility alongside labor shortages caused by national and global crises.

Change occurs in compounding generational waves that alternate between advancements and resistance.

Graphic Organizer: What story does the Great Migration tell us about change?

Selected Claim:

Evidence and Reasoning:

Evidence and Reasoning:

Evidence and Reasoning: