

If some African-Americans were disheartened by the increase in segregated schools in the state between 1870 and 1910, virtually all welcomed the passage in 1884 of the state's first major civil rights law, which guaranteed all New Jerseyans equal access to public accommodations and jury service. Those violating anyone's civil rights were to be fined and required to pay damages to the victim. This law, however, was openly violated, particularly with respect to public accommodations. In 1917 it was revised and weakened to discourage suits by aggrieved persons. Damages were no longer awarded to the victims but to charitable institutions, and the complainants had no voice in selecting the recipients.

1910-1940

As noted earlier, a significant movement of Afro-Americans out of the South into New Jersey did not originate with World War I. Rather, the war, which began in 1914, is important for the state's Afro-American history because it prompted great numbers of southern blacks to settle in New Jersey in a brief period, and because their settlement had a tremendous impact both on their host communities and on themselves. For the first time, for example, blacks entered the state's manufacturing work force in substantial numbers. Lured mainly by the prospect of better-paying jobs, southern blacks began to migrate to New Jersey in unprecedented numbers around 1915, as part of a general trek northward.

By 1930 there were over two hundred thousand blacks in the state, a huge gain over the roughly eighty-eight thousand in 1910 (see Maps 6 and 7). Of the twenty-one northern cities in 1930 that had black populations over ten thousand, four—Newark, Atlantic City, Camden and Jersey City—were in New Jersey. Only Ohio, with seven, had more. The black New Jersey experience had become even more urban than before. And most of this growth was in the cities of North Jersey. The exceptions were Trenton, whose black population almost quadrupled from 1910 to 1930, and Atlantic City and Camden. Newark in particular received a disproportionate number of newcomers, showing a fourfold increase in black residents between 1910 and 1930.

As more Afro-Americans entered the state's cities and industrial labor force, increasing numbers of black workers participated in organized labor. Blacks in longshore work and the clothing industry (including women workers) were among those organized. In 1917 Pros-

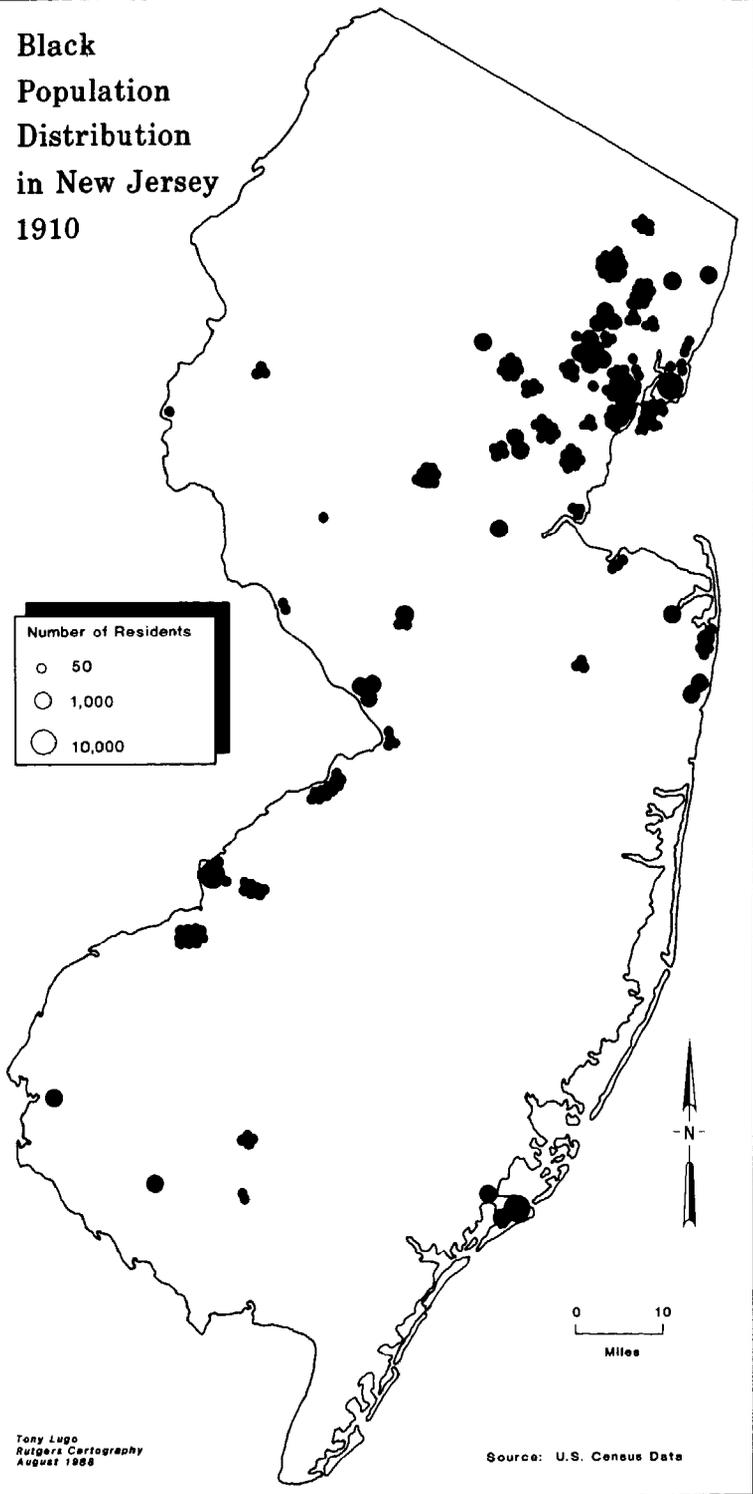
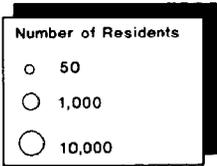


Because of the poor living and working conditions attendant to sharecropping, many Afro-Americans left the South during the first sixty-odd years of the twentieth century and moved to northern states in search of a better life. This photograph (c. 1915) shows a sharecropper and his family, their living quarters, and the cotton field they worked. The white man in the background is probably the owner of the plantation they lived on. Courtesy of the Balch Institute.

per Brewer led a strike of black dock workers at Port Newark which ended with a wage increase. In the dramatic and violent textile strike of 1926, involving the woolen mills of Passaic, Clifton, Garfield and Lodi, blacks were not only among the strikers, but four served as delegates on the strike committee and one was vice-chairman of the strikers' executive committee. In a strike in 1923 at the Sayre-Fisher brickmaking plant in Sayreville, blacks played a different role. The Newark Urban League recruited them to serve as strikebreakers, reflecting the long-standing hostility of many black middle-class leaders toward organized labor, especially the craft unions, because of discriminatory admission practices.

The Afro-Americans who arrived during the Great Migration laid the foundation for the state's black ghettos. Before this heavy influx, urban blacks lived mainly in scattered enclaves. But as the large

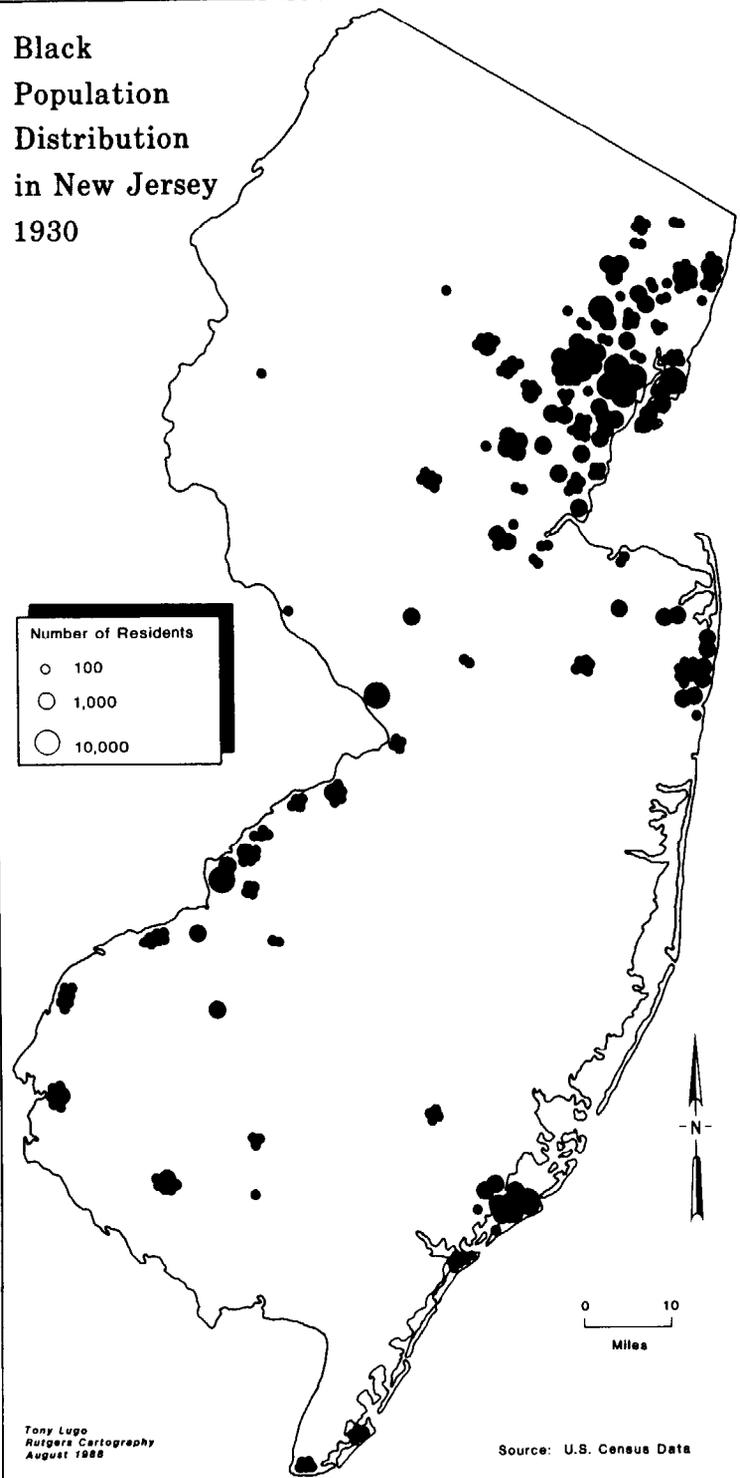
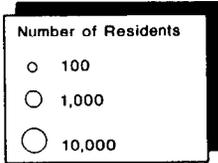
**Black
Population
Distribution
in New Jersey
1910**



Tony Lugo
Rutgers Cartography
August 1988

Source: U.S. Census Data

**Black
Population
Distribution
in New Jersey
1930**



Tony Lugo
Rutgers Cartography
August 1988

Source: U.S. Census Data



Dry-cleaning establishments, like this one in Newark (c. 1930s), offered migrants higher pay than they normally received in the South. Courtesy of Henrietta Parker.

numbers of newcomers encountered discriminatory housing practices, a new residential pattern emerged. Large concentrations of blacks developed in one or two sections of a city. Compared to the various European immigrant groups with whom they shared the cities, blacks generally experienced greater residential segregation. Not only did they tend to be more sharply segregated from other ethnic groups than those groups were from each other, but their residential isolation tended to increase over time while that of other ethnic groups lessened. Economic advancement, for example, did not free African-Americans from confinement to black residential areas; when they moved into previously all-white areas, those areas invariably turned black. In addition, the economic opportunities generated for blacks by World War I gradually disappeared during the 1920s. The now familiar signs of ghetto life began to appear: poverty, unemployment, dilapidated and overcrowded housing at high cost, inadequate sanitation and poor health standards.

The sizable presence of southern black newcomers gave rise to

many new institutions and organizations that were essential to the survival and integrity of the ghetto communities. The storefront church appeared, with a unique religious style that appealed to many migrants. In contrast to the older churches, it provided a more emotional and intense form of worship in a smaller and more personal setting.

Religious sects were also a part of the new social order. One of the most secretive was the Moorish Science Temple of America, which was formed in Newark in 1913 by Noble Drew Ali, a self-proclaimed prophet who had migrated to Newark from North Carolina. Ali later moved to Chicago and established a national Moorish Science Temple, from which Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam eventually emerged.

The Peace Mission Movement of Father Divine, which flourished during the Depression of the 1930s, attracted a considerable following among black New Jerseyans, especially in Newark. During the 1930s



The creation of storefront churches was one result of the Great Migration. Such churches enabled migrants to continue a style of religious worship they had practiced in the South. This church was in Newark in the 1930s. Courtesy of the New Jersey Division of Archives and Records Management.

the movement established several small businesses there and owned a fairly large building.

As the ghettos grew, more Afro-Americans were able to heed the age-old exhortations of black leaders and newspapers to go into business for themselves. Indeed, most of the state's black urban communities came to feature an array of black-owned establishments that catered mainly to blacks: building and loan associations, hotels, beauty parlors, dry cleaning shops, printing shops, funeral parlors, photography shops, pool halls, saloons, laundries, realty companies, employment agencies, shoe repair shops, confectioneries, butcher shops, ice houses, and dressmaking shops. The most successful tended to be barber shops, beauty parlors, restaurants, pool halls, and undertakers, which met needs normally ignored by white businesses in the ghetto. In contrast, small retail businesses owned by blacks were often unable to offer a wide variety of products and extend credit to customers, whereas their white competitors had the capital to offer these options to buyers.

The Apex Beauty Products Company in Atlantic City, a hair cosmetics firm, was by far the largest and most significant of New Jersey's black-owned businesses during this period. Established in 1919 by Sara Spencer Washington, it became one of the nation's leading black manufacturing companies. By the late 1930s its Atlantic City office and factory had eighty-seven employees, including chemists, clerks, bookkeepers, chauffeurs and beauty operators. The company also had eleven beauty schools in various cities. An estimated thirty-five thousand individuals throughout the world were dependent on the sales of its products and its method of "Scientific Beauty Culture."

The expanded ghetto economy also facilitated an increase of black professionals: teachers, physicians, nurses, dentists, lawyers, pharmacists and social workers. While the Great Migration's participants were largely poor and low in status, professionals also participated in the exodus north. Many of them helped organize such bodies as the New Jersey Association for Teachers of Colored Children, the Commonwealth Dental Association, and the North Jersey Medical Society.

The black press too benefited from the influx, and by 1940 over thirty black newspapers had been founded. Among the better known were the *Record*, the *Afro-American*, and the state's most widely circulated black weekly, the *New Jersey Herald News* (later the *Newark Herald News*). Aside from representing the black business



Sara Spencer Washington (1889–1953), founder of the Apex Beauty Products Company, was one of New Jersey's leading Afro-American entrepreneurs of the first half of the twentieth century. When she died her estate was worth over one million dollars. She also left an impressive record of involvement in social, civic, and political activities. Courtesy of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

interests that supported them financially, the black papers kept the community abreast of newsworthy events and continued the tradition of articulating the concerns, grievances and aspirations of the race.

No institutions affected by the Great Migration grew so rapidly as those meeting social and recreational needs. In most instances these organizations provided the only significant opportunity for group expression aside from the church. They included social clubs, whose activities ranged from card playing to handicrafts; cultural groups such as glee clubs, art clubs, drama societies, and "Negro History" clubs; veterans' groups, including the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars; youth groups such as the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts; and such civic groups as the United Civic and Welfare League of Plainfield, the Citizens' Civic League of Pleasantville, the North Jersey Civic Association of Newark and the Citizens' Civic Welfare League of New Brunswick.

Perhaps the most important organizations were the black lodges—the Masons, Odd Fellows, Elks, Knights of Pythias, American Woodmen, Sons and Daughters of Africa, Order of Moses, Good Samaritans, Eastern Star, Queen Esther Court, Court of Calanthe, Household of Ruth, and others. These bodies gave leadership opportunities and offered social and civic betterment through college scholarships, charity drives, volunteer services, and other programs. Many of them provided sick and death benefits for members. They also worked for the moral and social uplift of the race by promoting the development of strong individual character and stressing exemplary behavior.

Some organizations sought to advance the interests of the race by working for civil rights and challenging segregation and other symbols of racial intolerance. Most conspicuous were the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), organized in 1909, and the National Urban League, founded in 1911. The NAACP used litigation to fight racial barriers, especially in education and places of public accommodation. The Urban League aimed mainly at helping southern migrants adjust to the North, particularly in acquiring suitable employment and housing. Some of the early chapters of those organizations were established in New Jersey. The Orange NAACP, organized in 1913, was the first in the state, followed by the Newark NAACP in 1914. The Newark Urban League was created in 1919, an outgrowth of the Negro Welfare League, which had been established in 1917.

Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association

(UNIA) offered a contrasting ideology and style of protest. A black nationalist who emphasized racial pride, Garvey bitterly opposed what he considered the integrationist approach of the NAACP and the Urban League. He summoned Afro-Americans to a program of "African Redemption" that included resettlement in Africa. There were over thirty UNIA divisions in New Jersey, not only in cities like Newark, Jersey City, Trenton, Camden, and Atlantic City, but also in the smaller communities of Montclair, Vauxhall, Kenilworth, Burlington, Glassboro and Whitesboro. Garvey was imprisoned for mail fraud in 1925 and was deported to his native Jamaica in late 1927. The UNIA went into decline. Its ranks dwindled further during the Great Depression, as hard times forced Afro-Americans to look to their own immediate survival rather than to ambitious and far-reaching plans for global race betterment.

Of all New Jersey ethnic groups, Afro-Americans suffered most during the Depression of the 1930s. In 1932 black unemployment in the state was nearly twice that of whites. And once blacks lost their jobs they tended to remain unemployed longer than whites, so that they were more likely to become impoverished. In 1935 26 per cent of the families on relief in the state were black, although black families constituted only five per cent of the state's total family population. In 1937 the relief rolls in the state's eight largest cities revealed a disproportionate number of blacks; they were three to six times more likely to be relief recipients than whites in these cities. In Elizabeth, for example, where blacks constituted 4.2 per cent of the family population, they accounted for 28.5 per cent of the family relief cases.

Black worker displacement was another feature of the Depression. White workers drove blacks out of certain positions they had held for decades. Waiters, hotel workers, elevator operators and others were replaced by young white women, while janitors and others were supplanted by white men.

The radically depressed wages associated with the nation's most severe economic downturn provided greater opportunities for employer exploitation of black workers. Among domestic workers it led to unprecedented humiliation—to what contemporary observers called "slave markets." In these "markets," black women waited on street corners for white women to drive up, casually survey them, and then offer them a day's work.

The Great Depression also reduced the overall volume of southern black migration appreciably. However, it considerably increased the flow of southern black migratory workers into southern and central



Newark's black community was large enough to establish and sustain certain kinds of institutions in the face of racial discrimination. The photos above and top right (c. 1930s) show the medical staff of the Community Hospital of Newark, which was established in 1927. The lower photo shows the National Theater of Newark. Courtesy of the New Jersey Division of Archives and Records Management.

New Jersey. This flow had been reported as early as 1892, when blacks from Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina were identified as seasonal workers on farms in South Jersey. Many of those who entered New Jersey in the 1930s had been displaced by the mechanization of cotton production and by the cotton acreage reduction programs in effect during the 1930s. They replaced Italians, who often worked as family units, in harvesting the state's fruit, berry and produce crops. Drawn principally from the Eastern seaboard, many of these black workers began their cycle in Florida in the spring and worked in South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia before reaching New Jersey in the summer. At the height of the season in 1940, they totaled

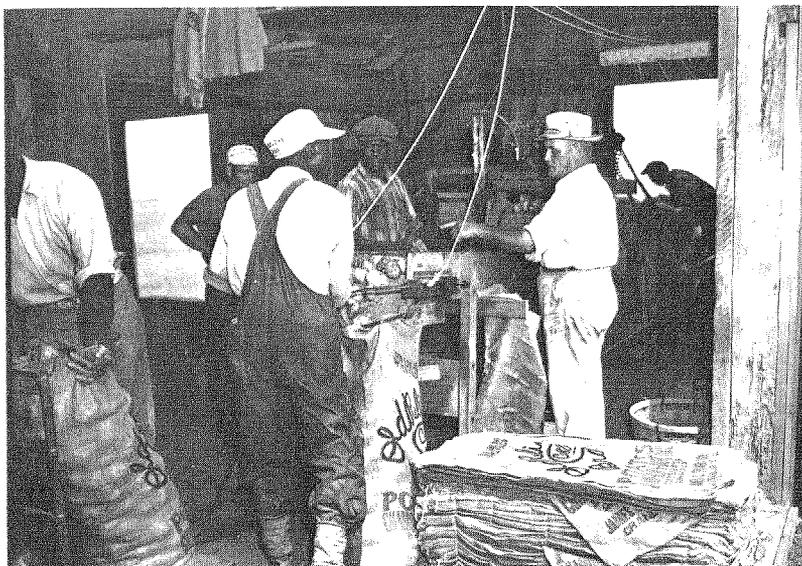


about ten thousand. Over four thousand were employed on the potato, fruit and vegetable farms of Mercer, Monmouth and Middlesex counties in that year alone. By the mid-1960s, Puerto Ricans had generally replaced these southern blacks.

The New Deal labor legislation of July 1935 affirmed the right of workers to organize. This gave rise to an attempt by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which had developed from the Committee for Industrial Organization formed in November 1935, to organize the nation's industrial labor force. Black workers in New Jersey had achieved a more diversified presence in this force despite the Depression. They were found in appreciable numbers in the steel, shipbuilding, and other industries where the CIO carried out organizing drives. The CIO's rival, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), despite its tradition of illiberal racial policies, also had Afro-Ameri-



New Jersey is one of the states in the Northeast to which black migrant workers from as far south as Florida come each year to labor on vegetable and fruit farms. This photograph dates from 1940 and was taken in Sawboro, North Carolina. Its original caption indicated that these workers were from Florida and were on their way to "Cranberry" (sic), New Jersey, to harvest potatoes. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.



This photograph (c. 1940s) shows black migrant workers sacking potatoes on a farm in Cranbury. The oppressive and exploitative conditions under which migrant workers have labored in New Jersey have been compared with the worst features of the sharecropping system in the South. Courtesy of the Newark Public Library.

cans in its ranks in the state. By the late 1930s black hod carriers, oystermen, teamsters, musicians and a few others were members of New Jersey AFL affiliates.

The economic distress of the Great Depression was accompanied by a growth in black political assertiveness and grass-roots protest. In the state's larger cities, for example, "Buy Where You Can Work" boycotts were organized to pressure white-owned businesses in black communities to integrate their work forces. Rent strikes for better housing were also conducted in these cities, as well as efforts to block the eviction of neighbors for failing to pay their rent. Other collective activities with which blacks defended themselves against the Depression were "rent parties" and the sharing and bartering of goods such as foods and services such as hairdressing.

During the Depression the political allegiance of Afro-Americans

changed dramatically. Influenced by the Civil War, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the Reconstruction period, blacks had for years solidly supported the Republican Party. It was the only major party that offered them a modicum of political power before the 1930s. Dr. George E. Cannon, a physician from Jersey City, for example, was active in the party at the city, county, state and national levels; as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1924 he seconded the nomination of Calvin Coolidge. When, thanks to the Great Migration, blacks reached sufficient numerical strength to start electing public officials in New Jersey, the first winners were Republicans. Walter G. Alexander of Orange, the first black member of the state legislature, was elected to the general assembly as a Republican in 1921. In the next decade he was followed by other black Republicans from Essex County.

During the 1930s blacks shifted to the Democratic Party, and in 1937 Guy Moorehead of Newark became the first black Democrat to serve in the assembly. The identification of the Democratic Party with the New Deal and the egalitarian vision of Franklin Delano Roosevelt were instrumental in this change in allegiance. The social welfare measures with which the New Deal addressed the hardships of the Great Depression were especially well received by the black community.

Between 1910 and 1940 the number of separate black schools continued to increase. From 1919 to 1930 it grew from fifty-two to sixty-six, and there were seventy black schools by 1935. On the eve of World War II, from Princeton south every city or town with an appreciable black population supported a dual system of elementary schools. A report submitted to the state legislature in 1939 deplored much about this system. Most commonly white pupils were taught in larger and more modern facilities than black students, and in some cases blacks were not even given the minimum essentials for adequate instruction—books, maps, gymnasium facilities, shop equipment. In a less common arrangement whites and blacks shared a school but had separate classrooms and sometimes separate entrances, toilets and playgrounds.

1940-1980s

World War II lifted the nation out of the Great Depression. It created a general shortage of workers that made many war-related