



Smithsonian Institution

National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Crisis, Vol. 14, No. 2

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[[image - map showing the migration of blacks from the South]]

[[caption]] APPROXIMATE TREND AND VOLUME OF NEGRO MIRATION FROM THE SOUTH, 1916-17. This is based on a total estimated migration of 250,000 persons in the last six months, and is compiled from a questionnaire covering the whole South. [[/caption]]

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demand for common labor. The U. S. Department of Labor writes:

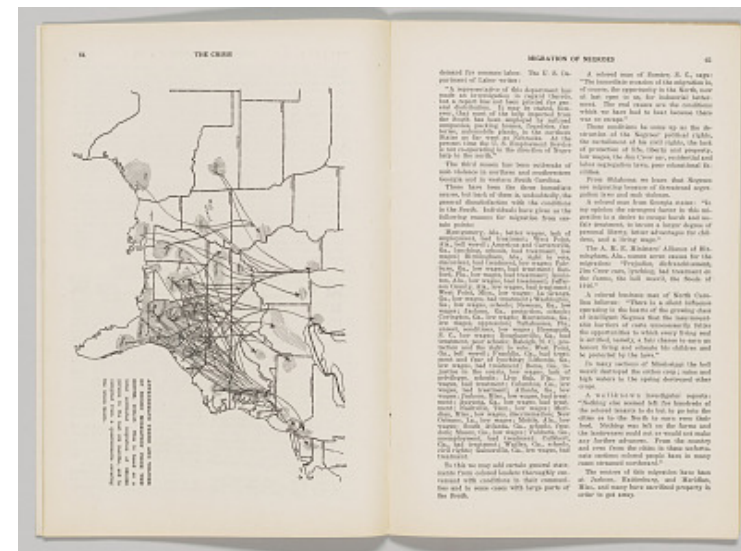
"A representative of this department has made an investigation in regard thereto, but a report has not been printed for general distribution. It may be stated, however, that most of the help imported from the South has been employed by railroad companies, packing houses, foundries, factories, automobile plants, in the northern States as far west as Nebraska. At the present time the U. S. Employment Service is not co-operating in the direction of Negro help to the north."

The third reason has been outbreaks of mob violence in northern and southwestern Georgia and in western South Carolina.

These have been the three immediate causes, but back of them is, undoubtedly, the general dissatisfaction with the conditions in the South. Individuals have given us the following reasons for migration from certain points:

Montgomery, Ala., better wages, lack of employment, bad treatment; West Point, Ala., boll weevil; Americus and Cartersville, Ga., lynching, schools, bad treatment, low wages; Birmingham, Ala., right to vote, discontent, bad treatment, low wages; Fairburn, Ga., low wages, bad treatment; Sanford, Fla., low wages, bad treatment; Anniston, Ala., low wages, bad treatment; Jefferson County, Ala., low wages, bad treatment; West Point, Miss., low wages; La Grange, Ga., low wages, bad treatment; Washington, Ga., low wages, schools; Newnan, Ga., low wages; Jackson, Ga., protection, schools; Covington, Ga., low wages; Montezuma, Ga., low wages, oppression; Tallahassee, Fla., unrest, conditions, low wages; Honeapath, S. C., low wages; Douglassville, Ga., bad treatment, poor schools; Raleigh, N. C., protection and the right to vote; West Point, Ga., boll weevil; Franklin, Ga., bad treatment and fear of lynching; Lithonia, Ga., low wages, bad treatment; Rome, Ga., injustice in the courts, low wages, lack of privileges, schools; Live Oak, Fla., low wages, bad treatment; Columbus, Ga., low wages, bad treatment; Atlanta, Ga., low wages; Jackson, Miss., low wages, bad treatment; Augusta, Ga., low wages, bad treatment; Nashville, Tenn., low wages; Meridian, Miss., low wages, discrimination; New Orleans, La., low wages; Mobile, Ala., low wages; South Atlanta, Ga., schools, freedom; Macon, Ga., low wages; Valdosta, Ga., unemployment, bad treatment; Cuthbert, Ga., bad treatment; Wadley, Ga., schools, civil rights; Gainesville, Ga., low wages, bad treatment.

To this we may add certain general statements from colored leaders thoroughly conversant with conditions in their communities and in some



cases with large parts of the South.

A colored man of Sumter, S. C., says: "The immediate occasion of the migration is, of course, the opportunity in the North, now at last open to us, for industrial betterment. The real causes are the conditions which we have had to bear because there was no escape."

These conditions he sums up as the destruction of the Negroes' political rights, the curtailment of his civil rights, the lack of protection of life, liberty and property, low wages, the Jim Crow car, residential and labor segregation laws, poor educational facilities.

From Oklahoma we learn that Negroes are migrating because of threatened segregation laws and mob violence.

A colored man from Georgia states: "In my opinion the strongest factor in this migration is a desire to escape harsh and unfair treatment, to secure a larger degree of personal liberty, better advantages for children, and a living wage."

The A. M. E. Ministers' Alliance of Birmingham, Ala., names seven causes for the migration: "Prejudice, disfranchisement, Jim Crow cars, lynching, bad treatment on the farms, the boll weevil, the floods of 1916."

A colored business man of North Carolina believes: "There is a silent influence operating in the hearts of the growing class of intelligent Negroes that the insurmountable barriers of caste unnecessarily fetter the opportunities to which every living soul is entitled, namely, a fair chance to earn an honest living and educate his children and be protected by the laws."

In many sections of Mississippi the boll weevil destroyed the cotton crop; rains and high waters in the spring destroyed other crops.

A well-known investigator reports: "Nothing else seemed left for hundreds of the colored tenants to do but to go into the cities or to the North to earn even their food. Nothing was left on the farms and the landowners could not or would not make any further advances. From the country and even from the cities in these unfortunate sections colored people have in many cases streamed northward."

The centres [centers] of this migration have been at Jackson, Hattiesburg, and Meridian, Miss., and many have sacrificed property in order to get away.

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