



1915

The Great Migration begins

Southern life in 1915 was difficult for many African Americans because of racial discrimination and crop failures caused by a Boll Weevil infestation. African American sharecroppers were out of work and had no other options in the south. After word spread about the five-dollar day, many African Americans moved to Detroit with hopes of working for Ford. When World War I began, an even greater demand for workers in the north brought more African Americans to Detroit. As whites also took over jobs in factories during wartime, many African Americans, especially women, were able to fill service jobs. The Great Migration increased racial tensions in northern cities because whites now had to compete for jobs.



¹ Migratory agricultural workers on Route 27 trying to “hitch.”

Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and White Negatives **Reproduction Number:** LC-USF34-040827-D **Call Number:** LC-USF34- 040827-D

² Group of Florida migrants on their way to Cranberry, New Jersey.

The Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and White Negatives

³ Florida migrant bringing her luggage out.

Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives

1915 The Great Migration begins

Credits:

Steven Hahn. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Keywords/Topics:

Migration, Work/Jobs

Questions:

1. Why did African Americans migrate to northern cities?
2. Why did World War I increase demand for workers?
3. What types of jobs awaited southern black migrants?
4. How were black migrants treated in the North?

Links to Internet Websites:

<http://www.inmotionaame.org/migrations/landing.cfm?migration=8&bhcp=1>

<http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/american-labor-movement.html>

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=443

1915 The Great Migration begins



From the Collections of the Library of Congress, Copy and Reuse Restrictions Apply, . See web use policy at <http://www.inmotionaame.org/gallery/detail.cfm?migration=8&topic=99&id=465477&page=11&type=image>

Two agricultural workers “hitching” north with hopes of harvesting potatoes.

1915 The Great Migration begins



The Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration/ Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives

Many times migrants could only bring with them what they could pack in their car. This family has tied their belongings to the outside of their car and are ready to begin their new life in the north.

1915 The Great Migration begins



Library of Congress, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives.

This woman has gathered the last of her belongings before moving north. Many times migrants could only take clothes and a few household items because they could not transport furniture and other large items.