

# Harlem Renaissance

## March-April 2024

March 7	How and why it began	Fran Grigsby
March 14	Early Leaders in Literature:	Eleanor Heginbotham
March 21	Music and Jazz Artists:	Mark Stevens
March 28	Poets and Writers:	Marcia Clemmitt
April 4	Art and Artists:	David Brody
April 11	Black Literature & Migration to Paris:	Shelley Brody
April 18	Blacks on Broadway:	Dan Moscovitz
April 25	The Legacy-Why it Ended & its Impact:	Karen Stewart

# What Was the Harlem Renaissance?

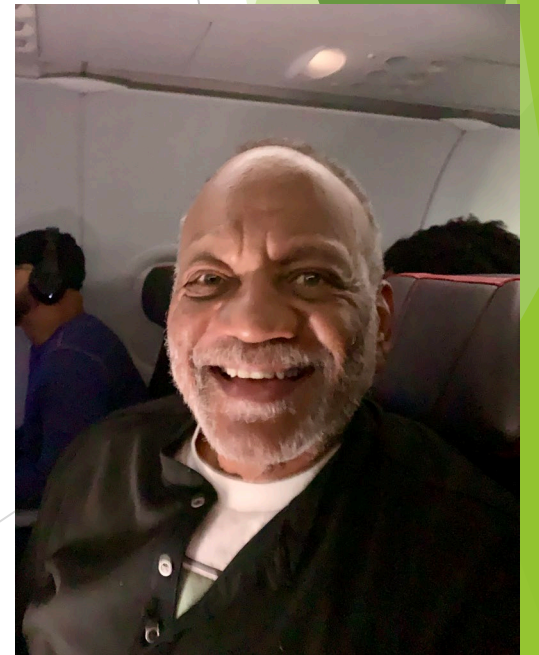
- ▶ Explosion of cultural expression 1917-1930s
  - ▶ Literature, music, dance, theater, art, fashion, politics, scholarship
  - ▶ Focusing on the history, culture, everyday life of African Americans
- ▶ In its time, known as the "New Negro Movement"
- ▶ "Harlem" but more than Harlem - national and international
- ▶ "Renaissance" celebrated African American creativity and culture
- ▶ Openly protested the era's legitimized racism - demanded recognition on high cultural plane
- ▶ Predictable, not serendipitous
- ▶ Self-conscious



Entertainers at Smalls' Paradise, Harlem nightclub 1929

# Today's Class - History and Context

- ▶ How and why it began
  - ▶ Artistic roots & thought leadership
  - ▶ Reconstruction to 1920
  - ▶ Why Harlem
- ▶ Context and perspective
- ▶ Humility



# Causes of the Harlem Renaissance

- ▶ Rich, eclectic culture
- ▶ Critical mass of talent
- ▶ Stalled economic, social, political progress
- ▶ “The Negro was in vogue”

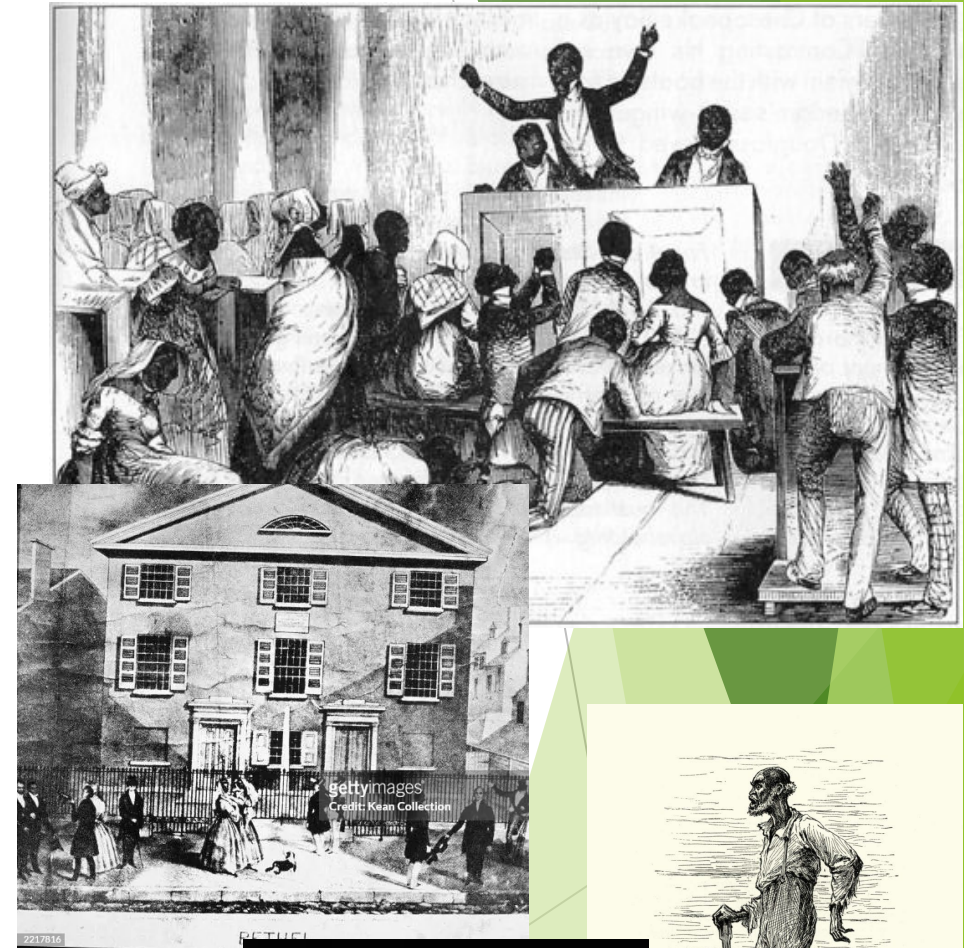
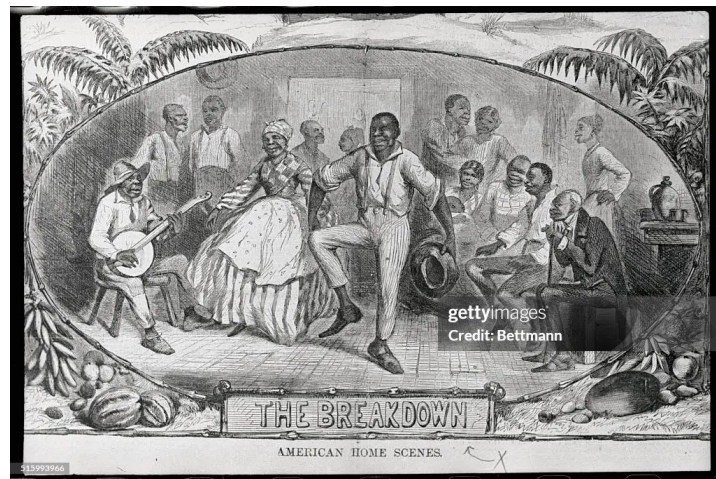
Slavery -  
within living  
memory of  
African  
Americans  
in the 1920s





# Cultural Memory Since 1619

- ▶ On slave ships and plantations - mixed geographies, languages, cultures
- ▶ Efforts by slave owners to remove identity - illiteracy, drumming and gatherings forbidden, “heathen” gods forbidden
- ▶ Persistent culture - customs, beliefs, harmonies, rhythms, folk tales, language
- ▶ Christianity’s messages - obedience and equality

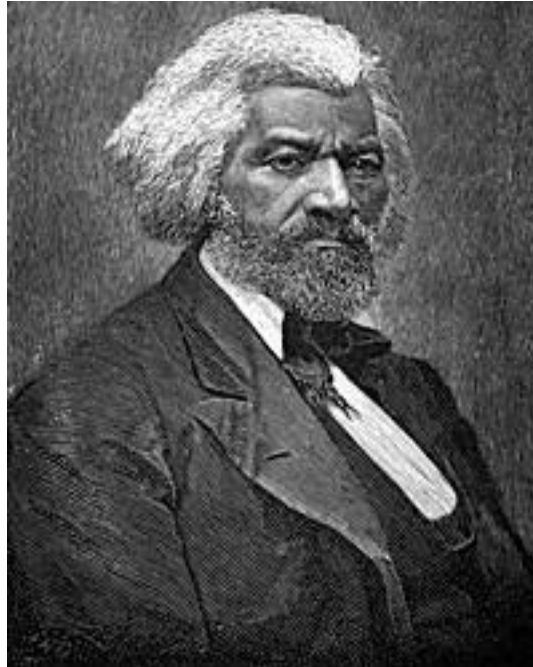


# Symbol of Emancipation

*“Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have the exact measure of the injustice and wrong which will be imposed on them.”*

*“One and God make a majority.”*

*“Knowledge makes a man unfit to be a slave..”*



*“I prayed for twenty years but received no answer until I prayed with my legs.”*

**Frederick  
Douglass  
1818-1895**

*“The white man’s happiness cannot be purchased by the black man’s misery.”*

*“Where justice is denied, where poverty is enforced, where ignorance prevails, and where any one class is made to feel that society is an organized conspiracy to oppress, rob and degrade them, neither persons nor property will be safe.”*

*Reformer, influential in North and Europe  
Escaped slave, orator, writer*





# Emancipation did not Bring Equal Rights, Economic Opportunity, Social Equity

‘What shall we do with the Negro?’ I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us... If you see him on his way to school, let him alone, don’t disturb him! If you see him going to the dinner-table at a hotel, let him go! If you see him going to the ballot-box, let him alone, don’t disturb him!”

- *Frederick Douglass, What the Black Man Wants, 1865*

‘No sooner had Northern armies touched Southern soil than this old question, newly guised, sprang from the earth,—What shall be done with Negroes? Peremptory military commands this way and that, could not answer the query; the Emancipation Proclamation seemed but to broaden and intensify the difficulties; and the War Amendments made the Negro problems of to-day.’”

- *W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, 1903*



# Collapsed Economy, Competing Interests, 4M Freed African Americans

**Andrew  
Johnson  
Administration**

*Quick  
restoration of  
secessionist  
states*

*No federally  
guaranteed  
rights for  
freed  
people*

**African  
Americans,  
Radical  
Republican**

*Land to  
farm*

*Education*

*Economic,  
civil and  
social  
equality*

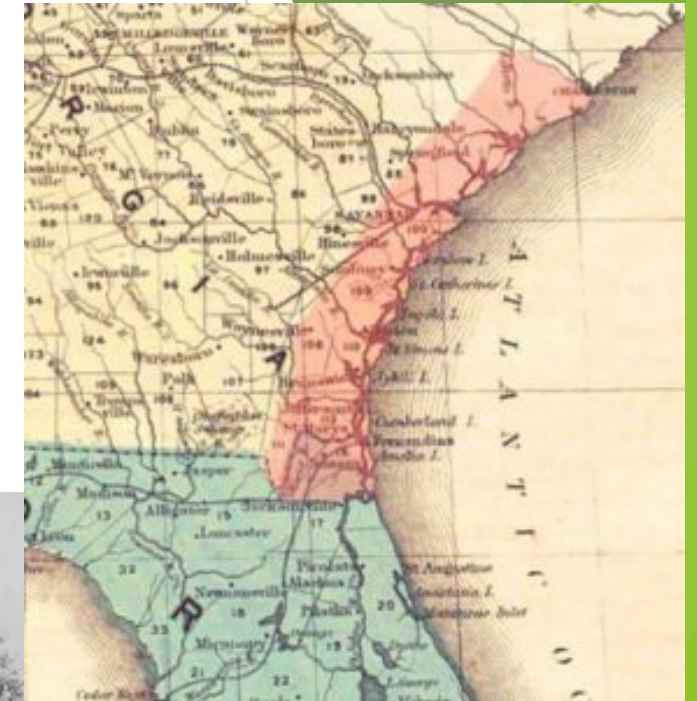
**Secessionist and  
Border State  
Whites**

*Restore  
cheap  
agricultural  
labor*

*Impose  
ruling class  
lifestyle*

# Land without Labor, Labor without Land

- ▶ Landowners bartered land for labor - Sharecropping
- ▶ Policy was wage labor, not land ownership, for freedmen
- ▶ Confiscated lands returned

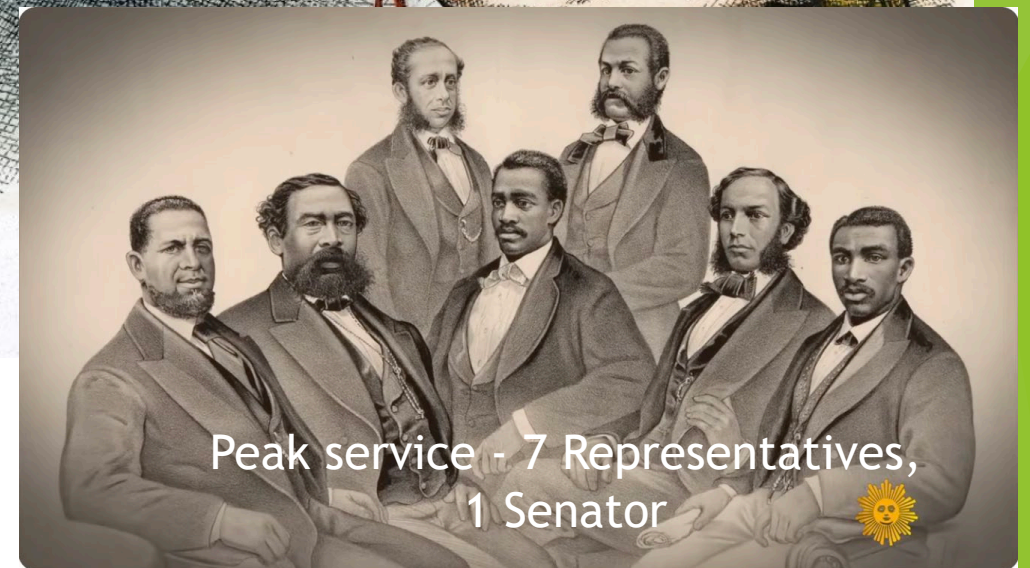
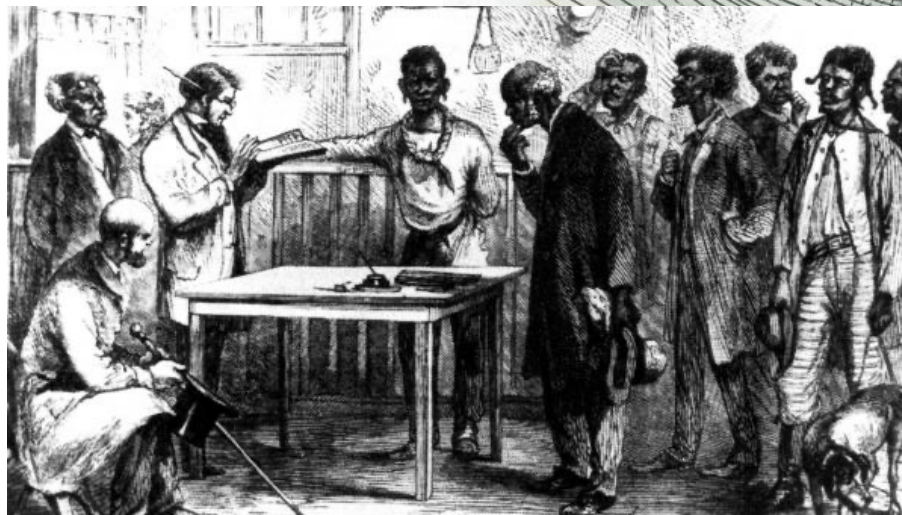
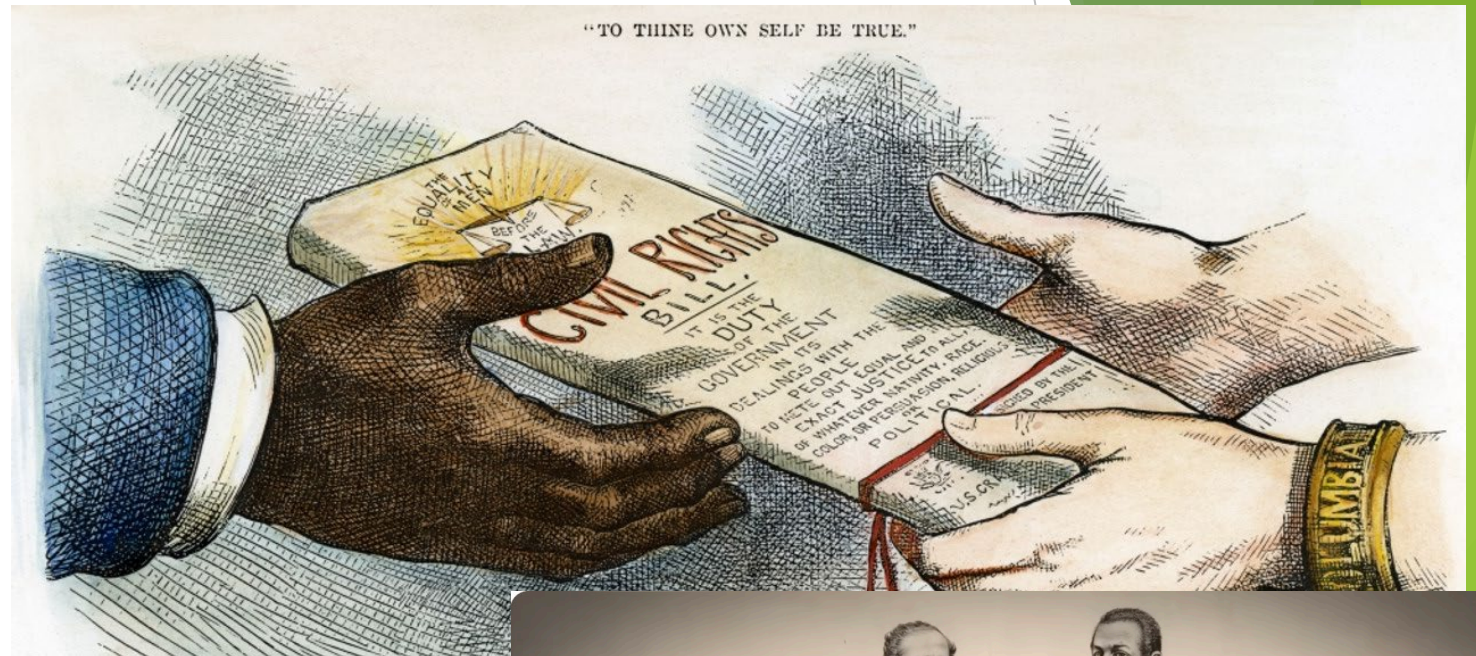


Forty acres and  
a mule -  
Special Field  
Order 15



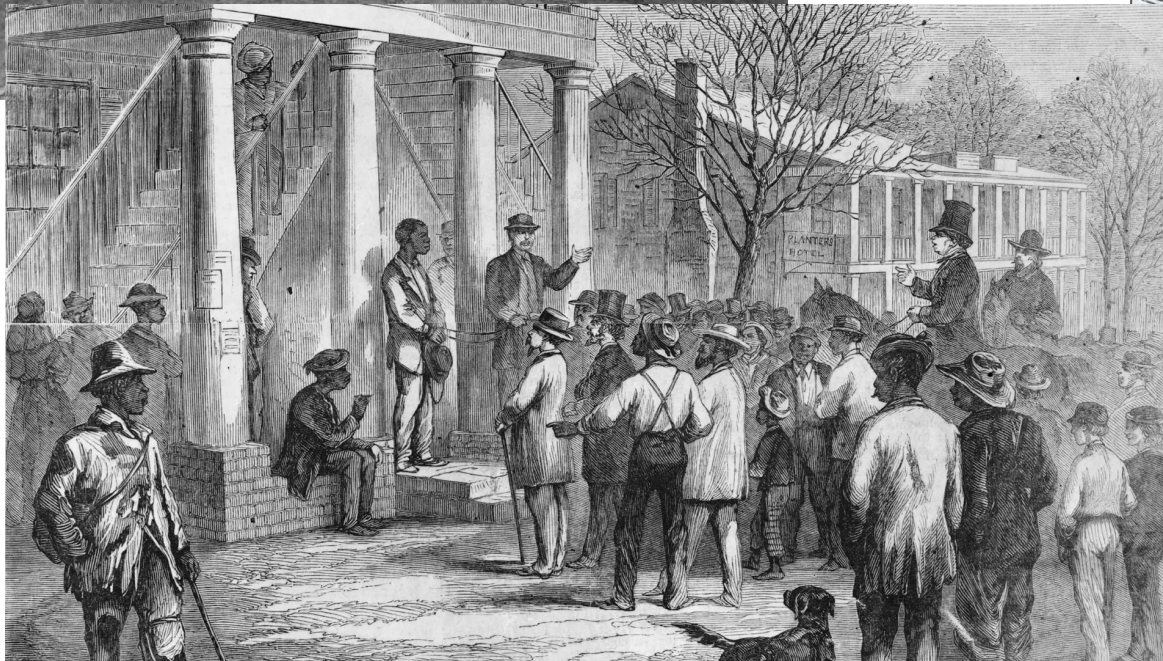
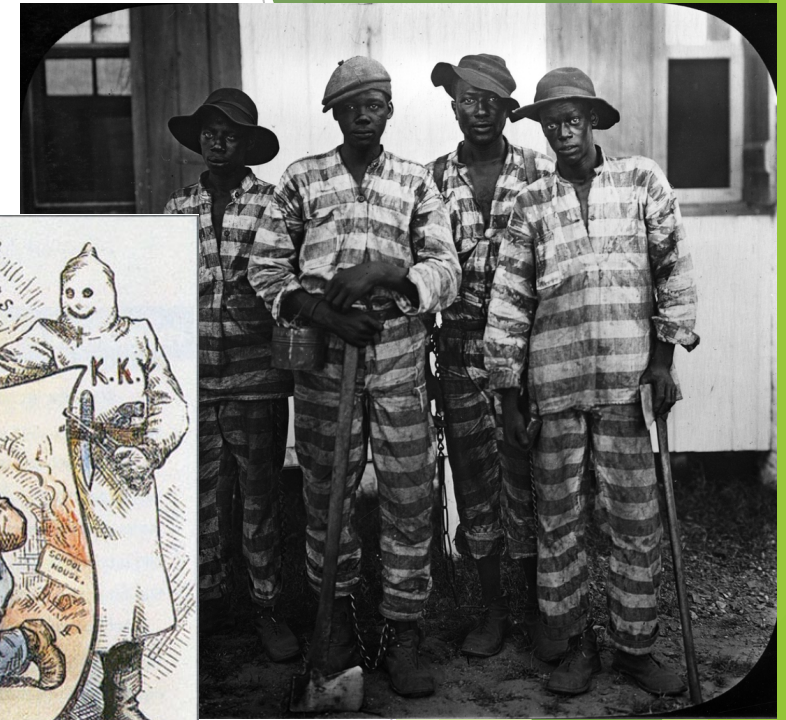
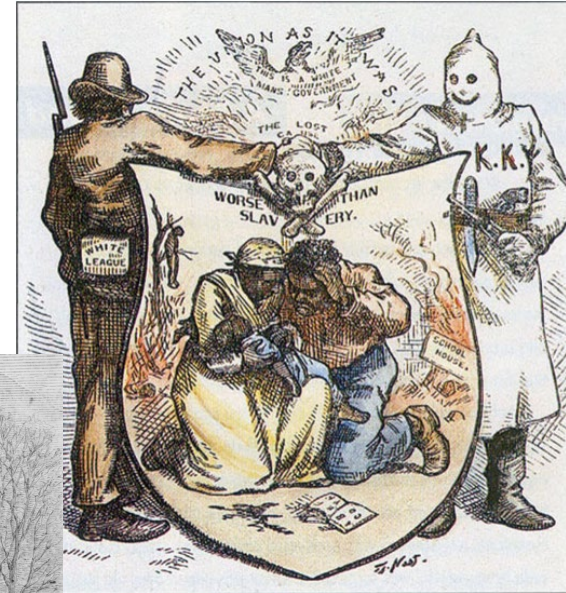
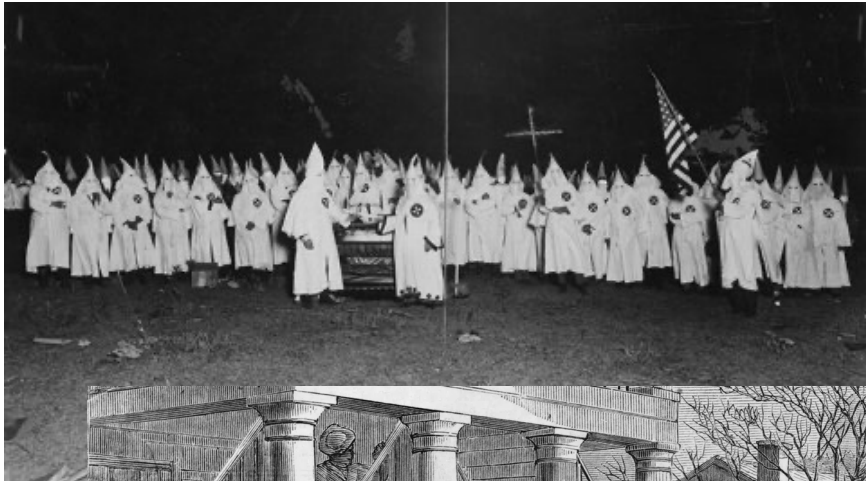
# Promise of Equality

- ▶ Civil Rights Act of 1866
- ▶ Reconstruction Acts 1867
- ▶ Fourteenth Amendment 1868
- ▶ Fifteenth Amendment 1870
- ▶ Enforcement Acts 1870-71
- ▶ Civil Rights Act of 1875





# Black Codes and Intimidation



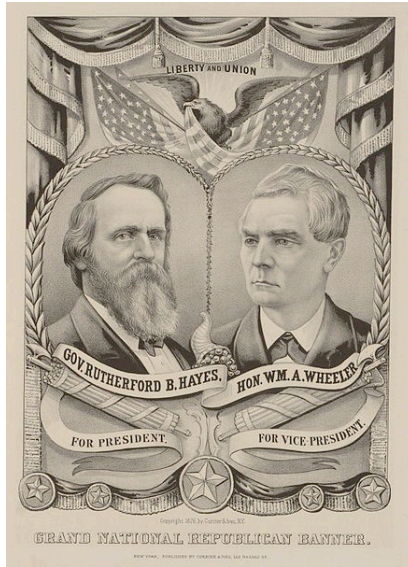
“This is a country for white men, and as long as I am President, it will be a government for white men.”

- President Andrew Johnson



# Collapse of Reconstruction and Jim Crow

1877  
Compromise  
- US army  
withdraws  
from  
Southern  
states

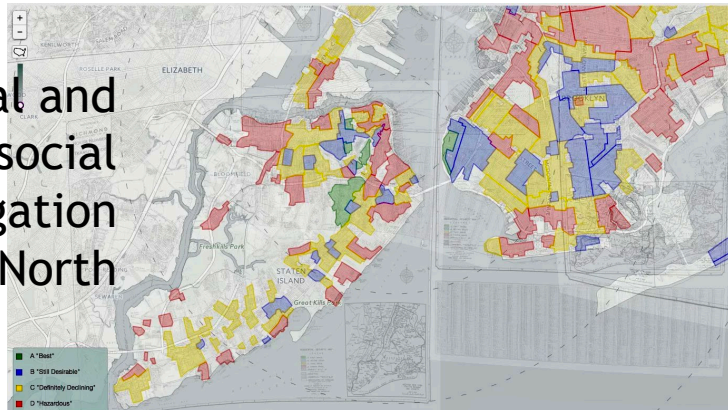


Supreme Court:  
Civil Rights laws  
unconstitutional



Plessy v. Ferguson  
Separate but equal

Financial and  
social  
segregation  
in the North



State  
constitutions  
and laws  
define  
economic,  
educational  
and social  
inequality



Wilmington Coup 1898  
Riots Atlanta 1906  
Springfield IL 1908 etc.



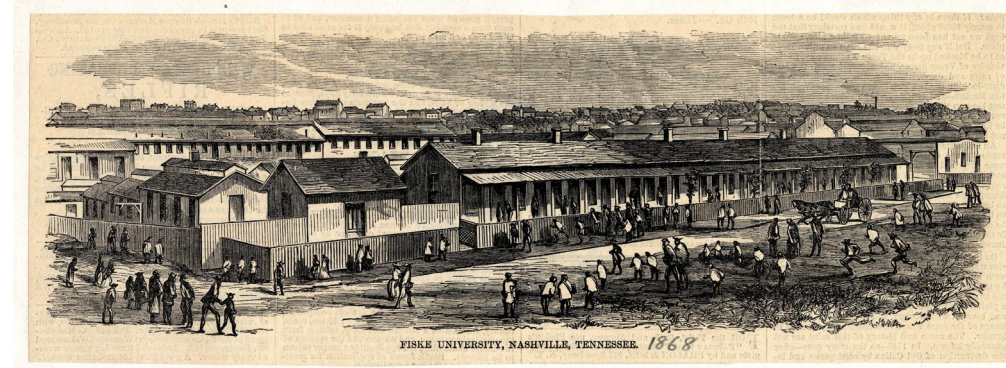
# Sowing the Seeds of Cultural Leadership

- ▶ Freedmen's Bureau, American Missionary Association and black communities established schools
- ▶ 50% of African Americans Literate by 1900
- ▶ Colleges to provide teachers for black schools
- ▶ Medical and legal aid, family unification
- ▶ Underfunded, mismanaged, shut down 1872



Howard Main 1900  
(founded 1867)

Fisk Free Colored School  
1866 (former barracks)



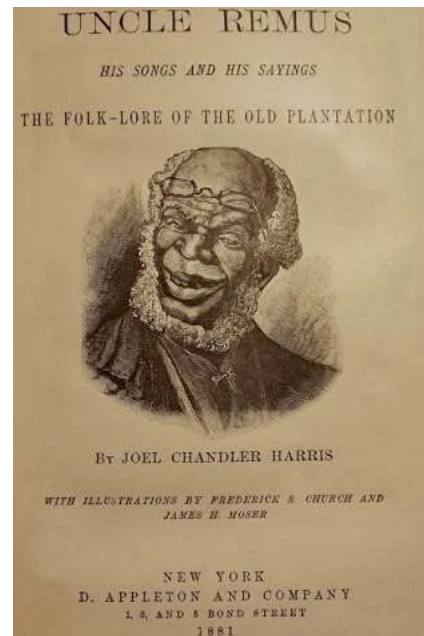
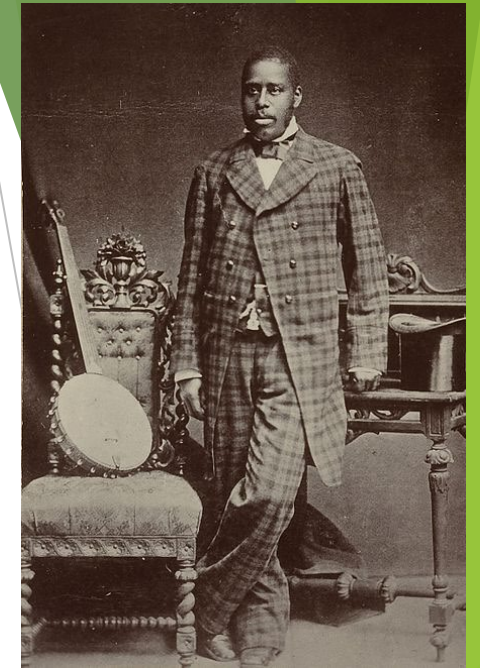
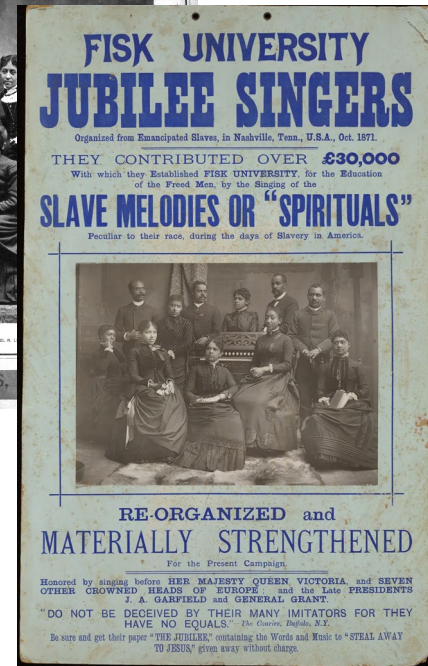
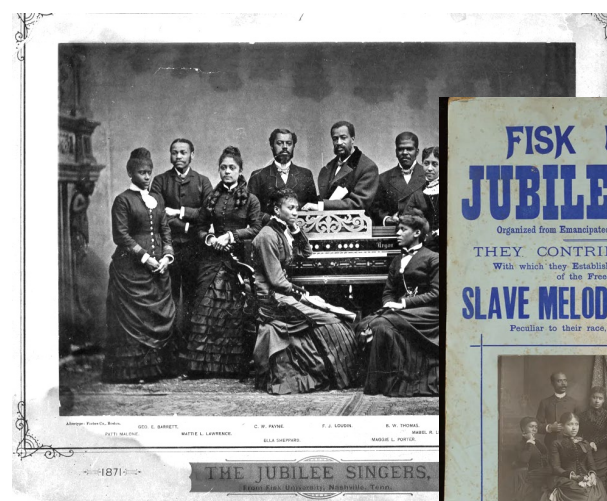
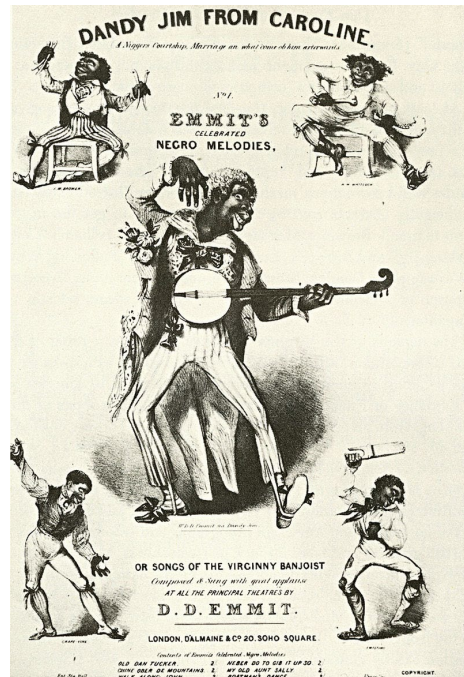


# Stereotypes, Mockery and Curiosity

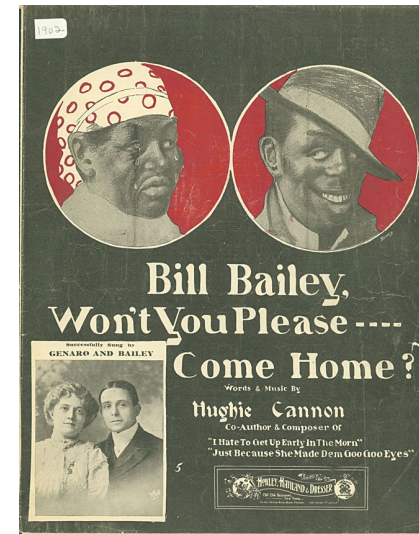


Jump Jim Crow  
1830s

Virginia Minstrels  
1844



Joel Chandler Harris,  
Uncle Remus: His Songs  
and Sayings 1881



1902

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLN1jjW2mcc>



# Education, Entrepreneurship and Compromise

“I have learned that success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he has had to overcome while trying to succeed.”

**Booker T. Washington**  
1856-1915

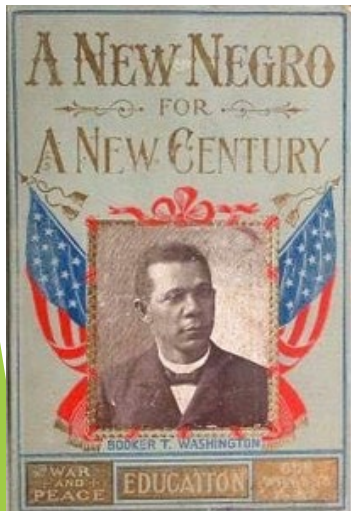


“Success in life is founded upon attention to the small things rather than to the large things; to the every day things nearest to us rather than to the things that are remote and uncommon.”

Programs that trained blacks for the lives they were likely to lead and the jobs they could get

*Tuskegee Institute, 1881*  
*Atlanta Compromise, 1895*

Dined with Theodore Roosevelt in the White House, 1901



1900

# Journalism and Lynching

“Brave men do not gather by thousands to torture and murder a single individual, so gagged and bound that he cannot make even feeble resistance or defense.”

“...For all kinds of offenses - and, for no offenses - from murders to misdemeanors, men and women are put to death without judge or jury”



**Ida B. Wells**  
**1862-1931**

*Anti-lynching investigative journalist*  
*Founder of NAACP*

“The people must know before they can act, and there is no educator to compare with the press.”

“Our country’s national crime is lynching. It is not the creature of an hour, the sudden outburst of uncontrolled fury, or the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob.”

# History, Activism, Self-Awareness

"We want full manhood suffrage and we want it now.... We are men! We want to be treated as men. And we shall win."

*Editor, The Crisis  
NAACP Journal*

*"The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery." (1935)*




**W.E.B. Du Bois**  
**1868-1963**

*Sociologist, prolific author, historian  
Voice for the international and activist  
black community*

*Niagara Movement, 1905  
NAACP, 1909  
Pan-African Congresses*


*"Now is the accepted time, not tomorrow, not some more convenient season. It is today that our best work can be done and not some future day or future year."*



...the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. **It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.** One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder....

**The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line,**—the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903



*“Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may inquire. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.”*

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903

“Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life. The Talented Tenth of the Negro race must be made leaders of thought and missionaries of culture among their people. No others can do this and Negro colleges must train men for it. The Negro race, like all other races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.”

W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative Negroes of To-day*, 1903

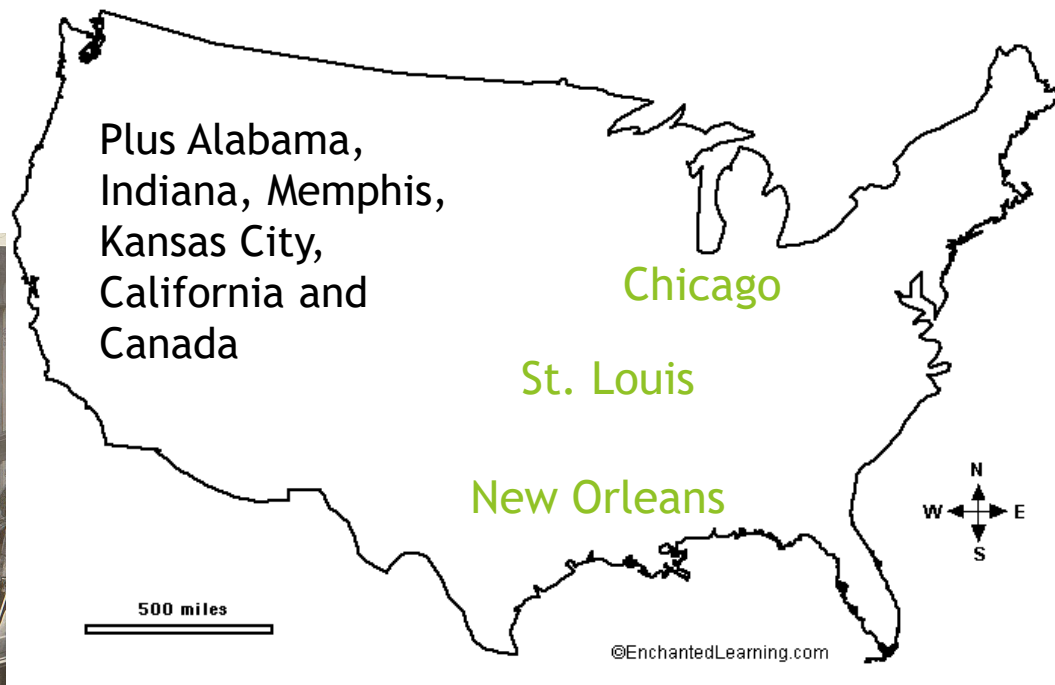
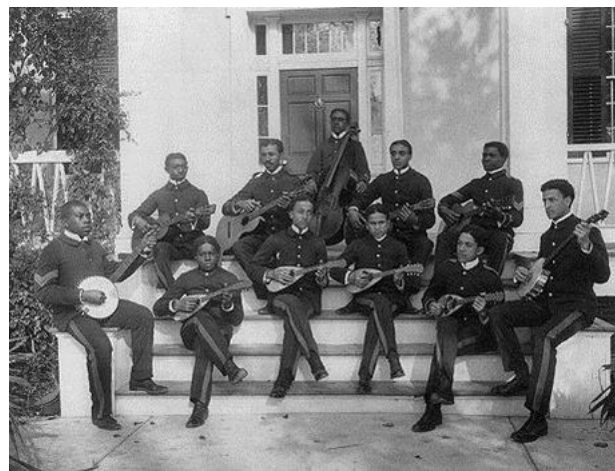


# Musical Migration

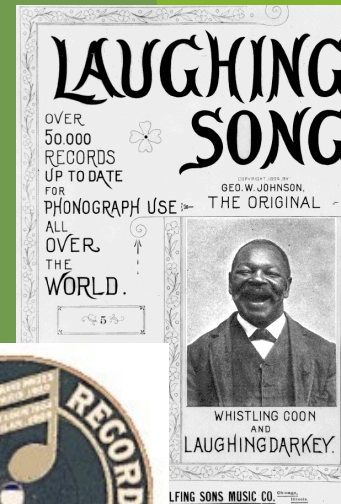
Blues  
1860s

Ragtime  
1890s

Jazz  
1910s



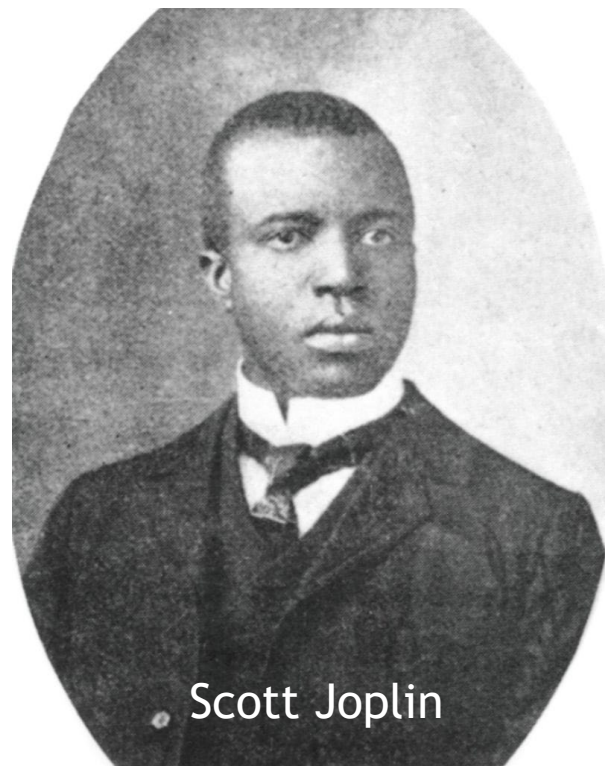
George W. Johnson  
1890



His last, unbilled recording  
(click for larger image)



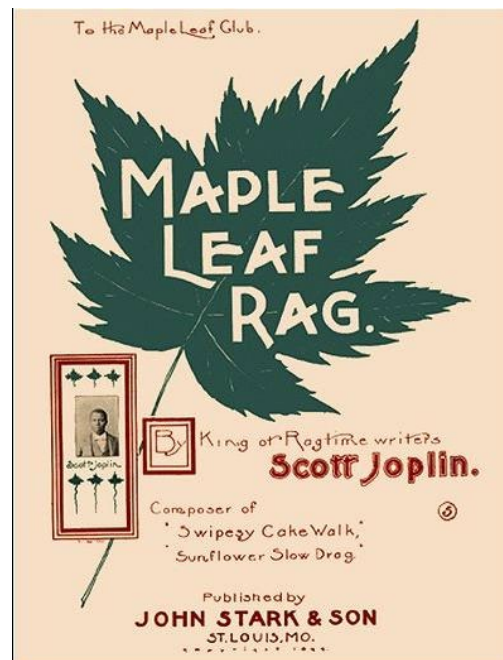
# St. Louis, Kansas City and the Bluenoses



Scott Joplin



Eblon Theater  
Orchestra  
James Scott



1899



Vernon and Irene Castle  
1911-1918  
Turkey Trot, Grizzly Bear, Samba





# Blues from Regional to National



W.C. Handy  
“Father of the Blues”



Mamie Smith



Ma Rainey



Bessie Smith

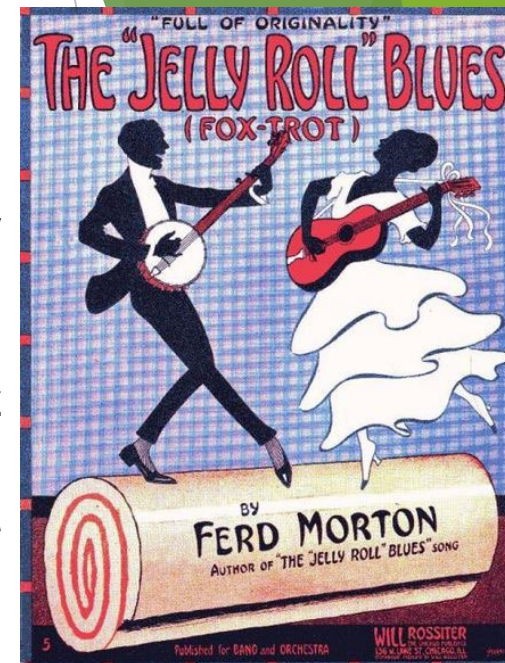
Mamie Smith



# Congo Square and Storyville, 1897-1917



Jelly Roll Morton's "Jelly Roll Blues", published 1915  
First jazz composition in print



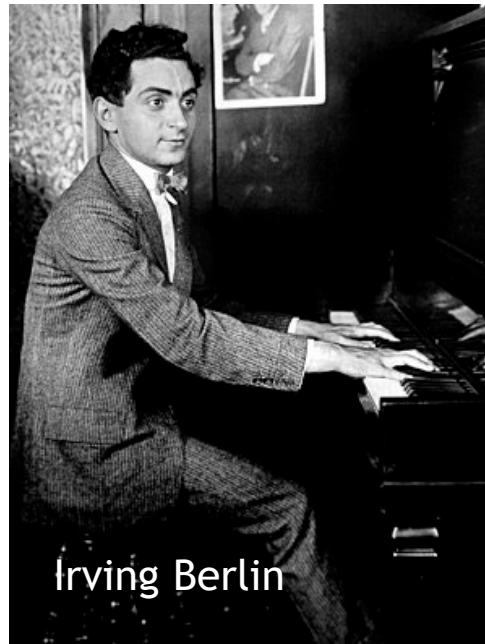
Tony Jackson and his song "Pretty Baby"



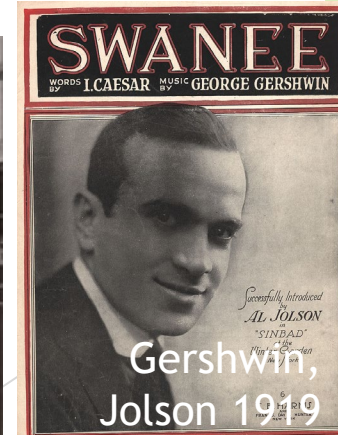
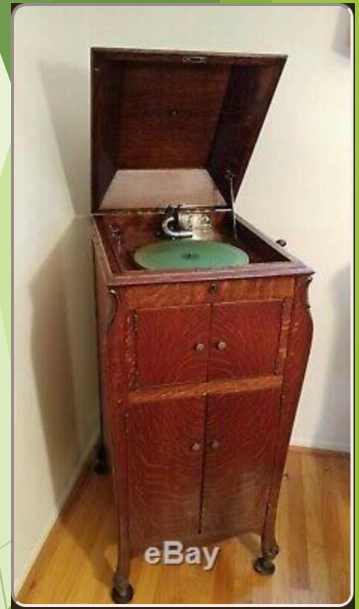
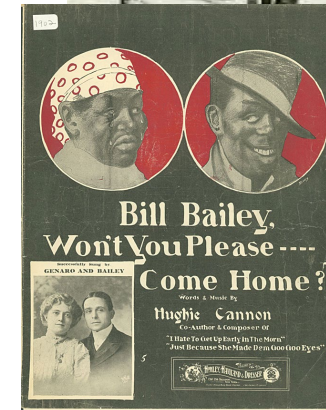
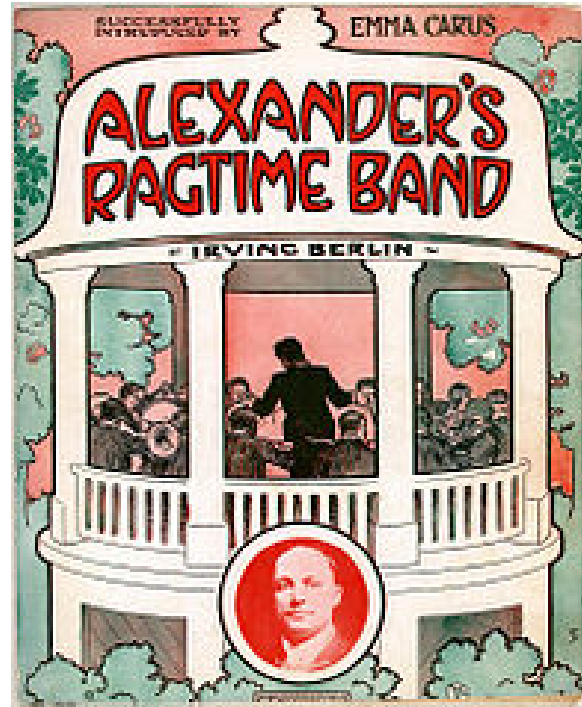
Commemorative relief in Congo Square



# Technology and Tin Pan Alley



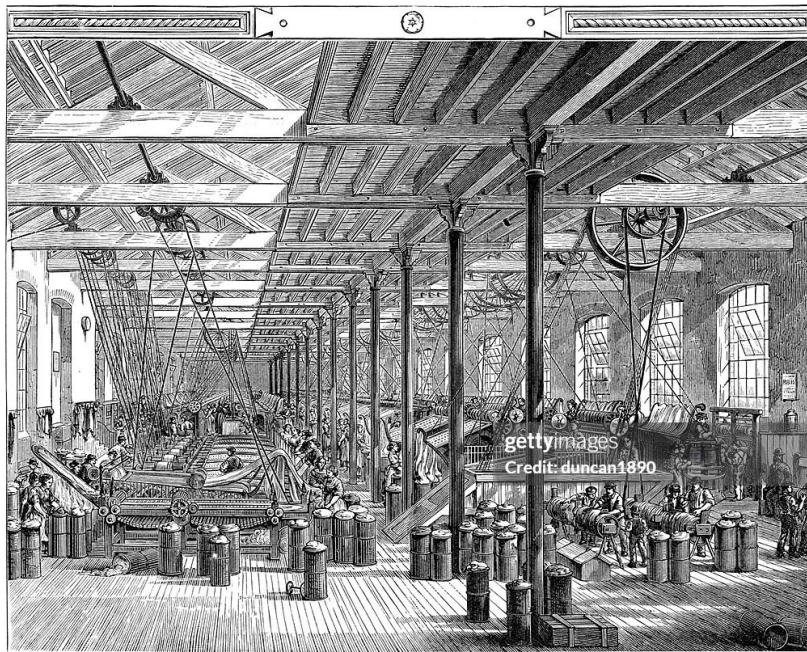
Eleven versions in Top 40  
1911 - 1947



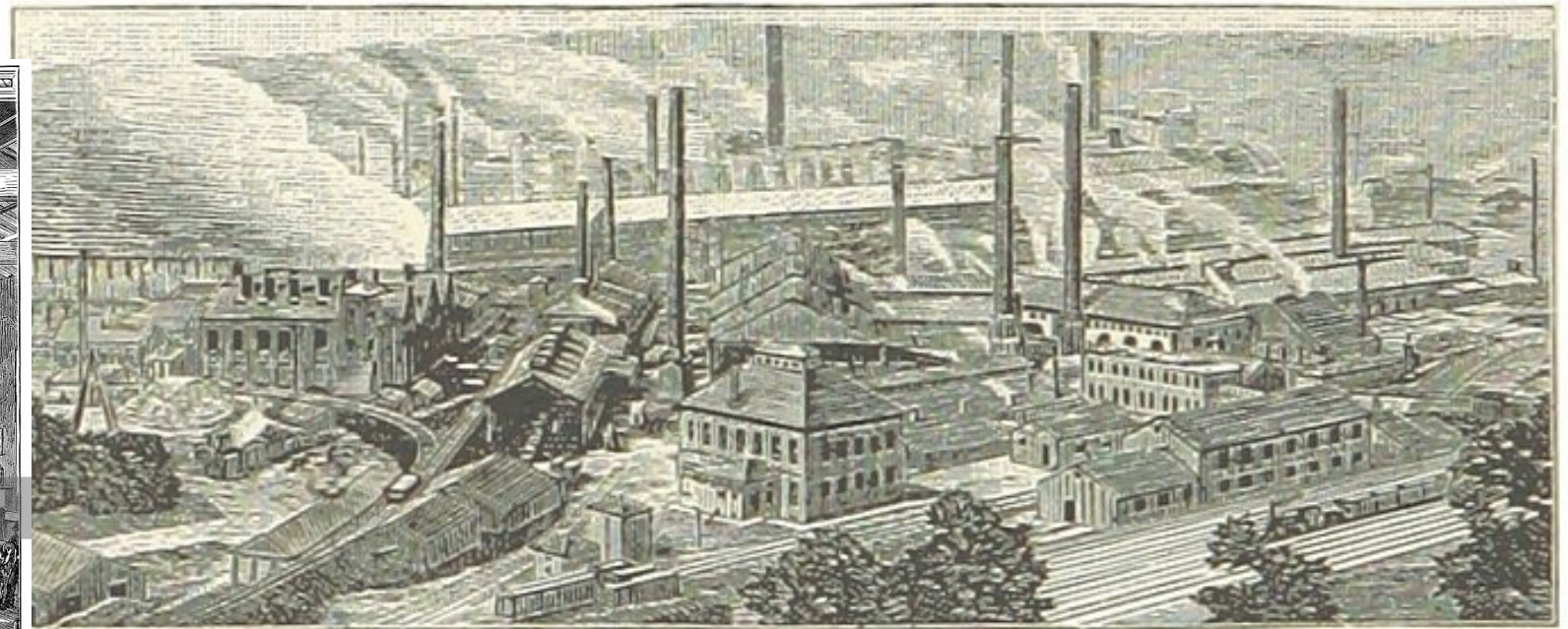


# Industrialization - The Workers Side of the Gilded Age

- ▶ US grew to 11% of international trade



184326204  
THE SPINNING-ROOM IN SHADWELL ROPE WORKS.



BESSEMER : THE EDGAR THOMSON STEEL WORKS AND BLAST-FURNACES.



# Communication - Access to Information, Workers and Jobs

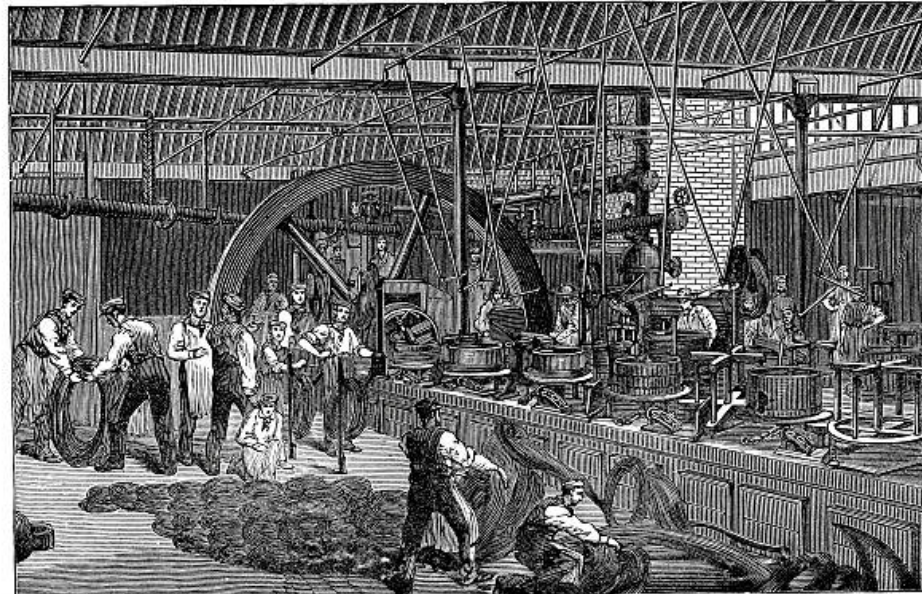
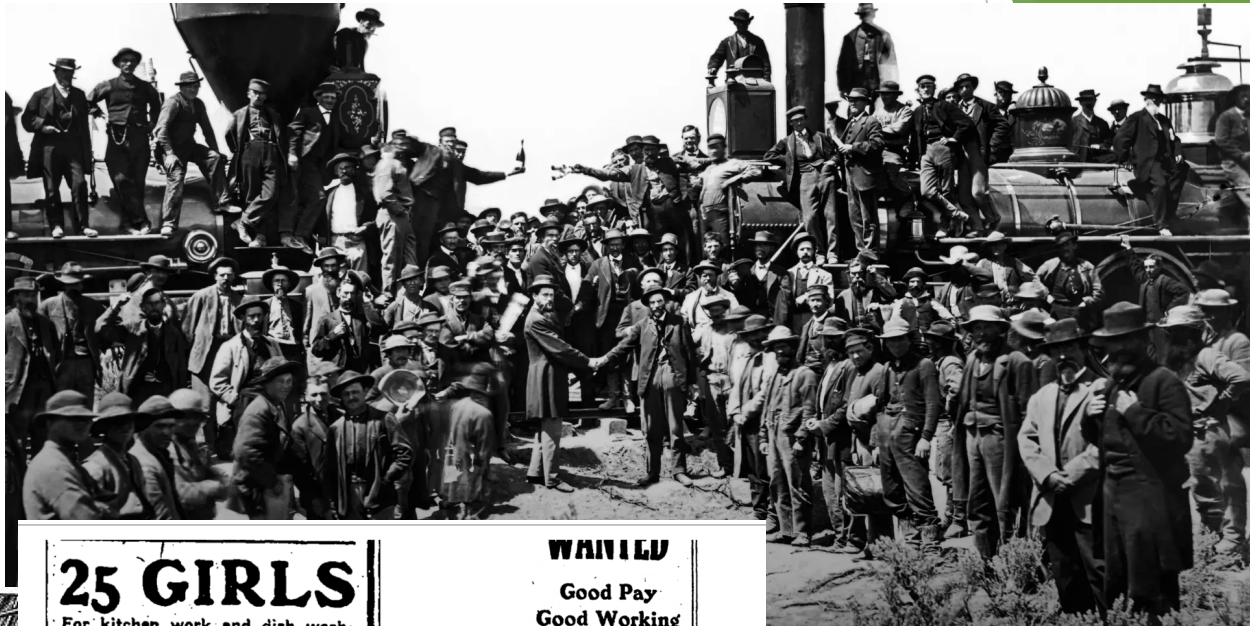


FIG. 298.—Making Wires for Atlantic Telegraph Cable.

## 25 GIRLS

For kitchen work and dish washing; salary, \$7 per week and board.

**John R. Thompson  
Restaurant**

314 S. State St. Between 7 and  
8:30 a. m. Ask for Mr. Brown.

## WANTED

**Good Pay  
Good Working  
Conditions**

Firms supply cottages for  
married men. Apply

**T. L. JEFFERSON**  
3439 STATE STREET

## LABORERS WANTED

**\$3.60 to \$3.95 Per Day**

—FOR—

**MINNESOTA STEEL MILLS**

Will advance fare not to exceed  
\$10 upon signature to contract  
furnished and returned.

Apply to  
**R. C. McCULLOUGH**  
510-11 Columbia Bldg., Duluth, Minn.

## MEN

**Come to the Aid  
of Your Country**

Now is the time to show **UNCLE SAM**  
what you can do to help win this WAR.  
We are making Brake Shoes and Cast-  
ings for our Government, and we need  
your help.

We want Twenty good, strong Labor-  
ers to learn Drop Machine Molding,  
and we will pay 42 cents per hour  
while learning.

Our Drop Machine Molders make from  
\$7 to \$8 per day. Come and see for  
yourself. No Labor Trouble whatever.

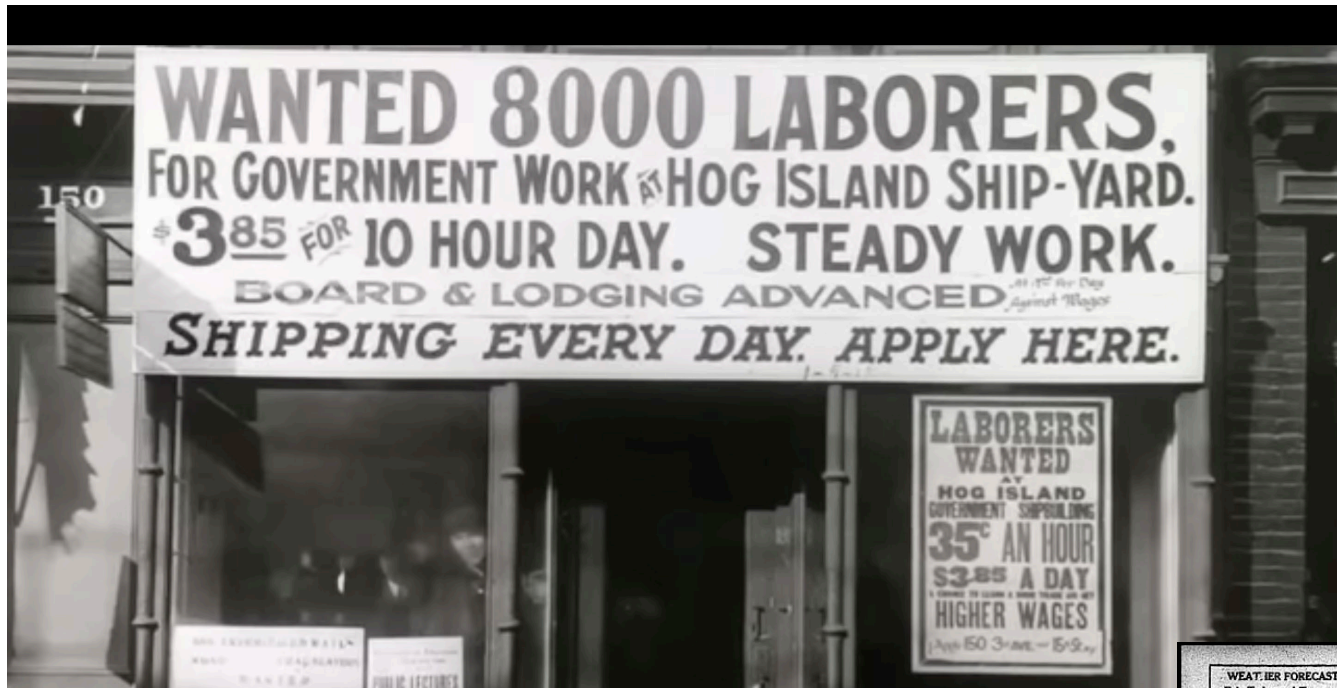
ASK FOR MR. SANDERS

**AMERICAN BRAKE SHOE AND  
FOUNDRY COMPANY**

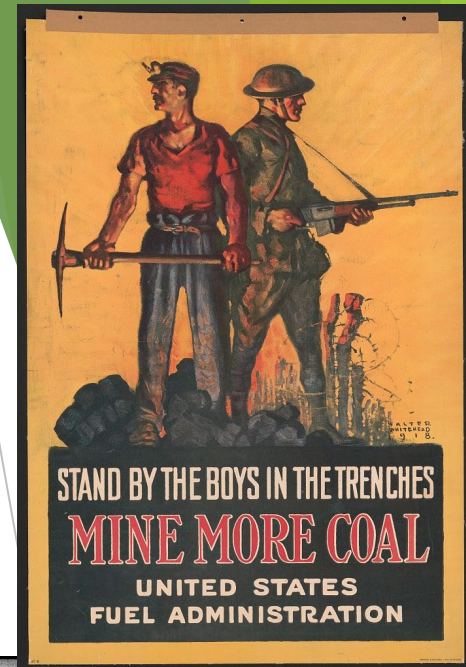
4516 WEST 26TH ST., CHICAGO







# War - Acceleration and Retooling



War in Europe  
1914

US Entry  
1917

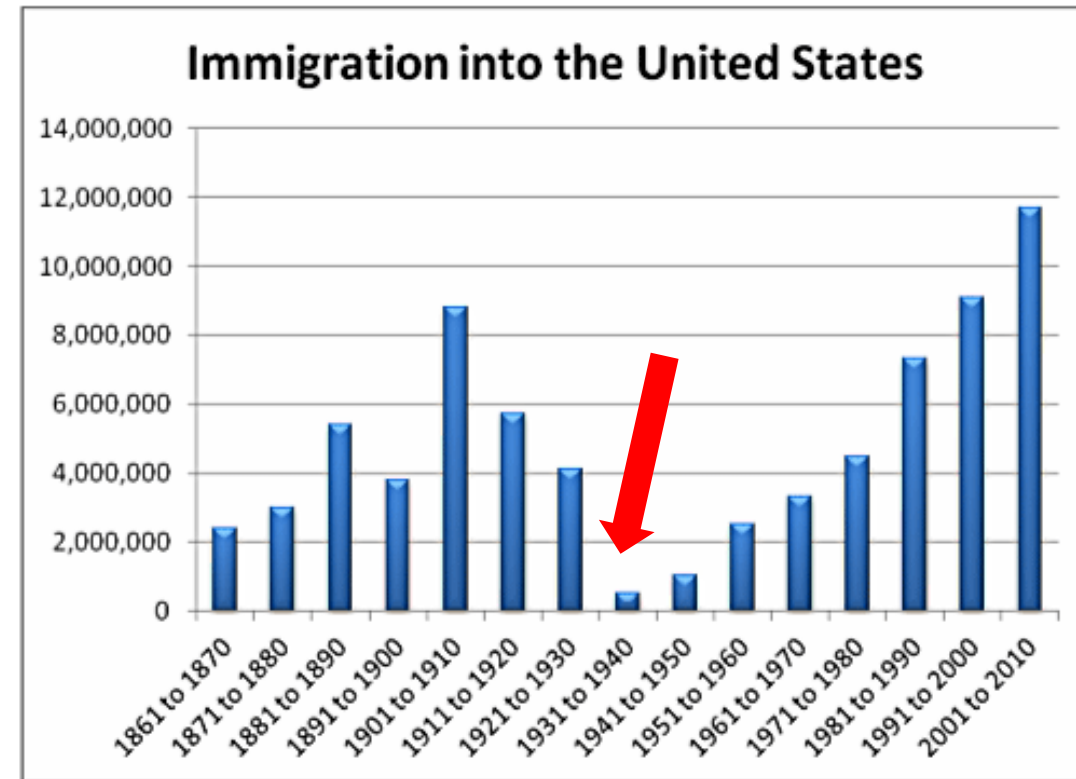




# Immigration Tide Halted

Of 99M population:

- 12% former slaves
- 14% foreign born
- 20% one parent born abroad



12M immigrants  
1900-1914

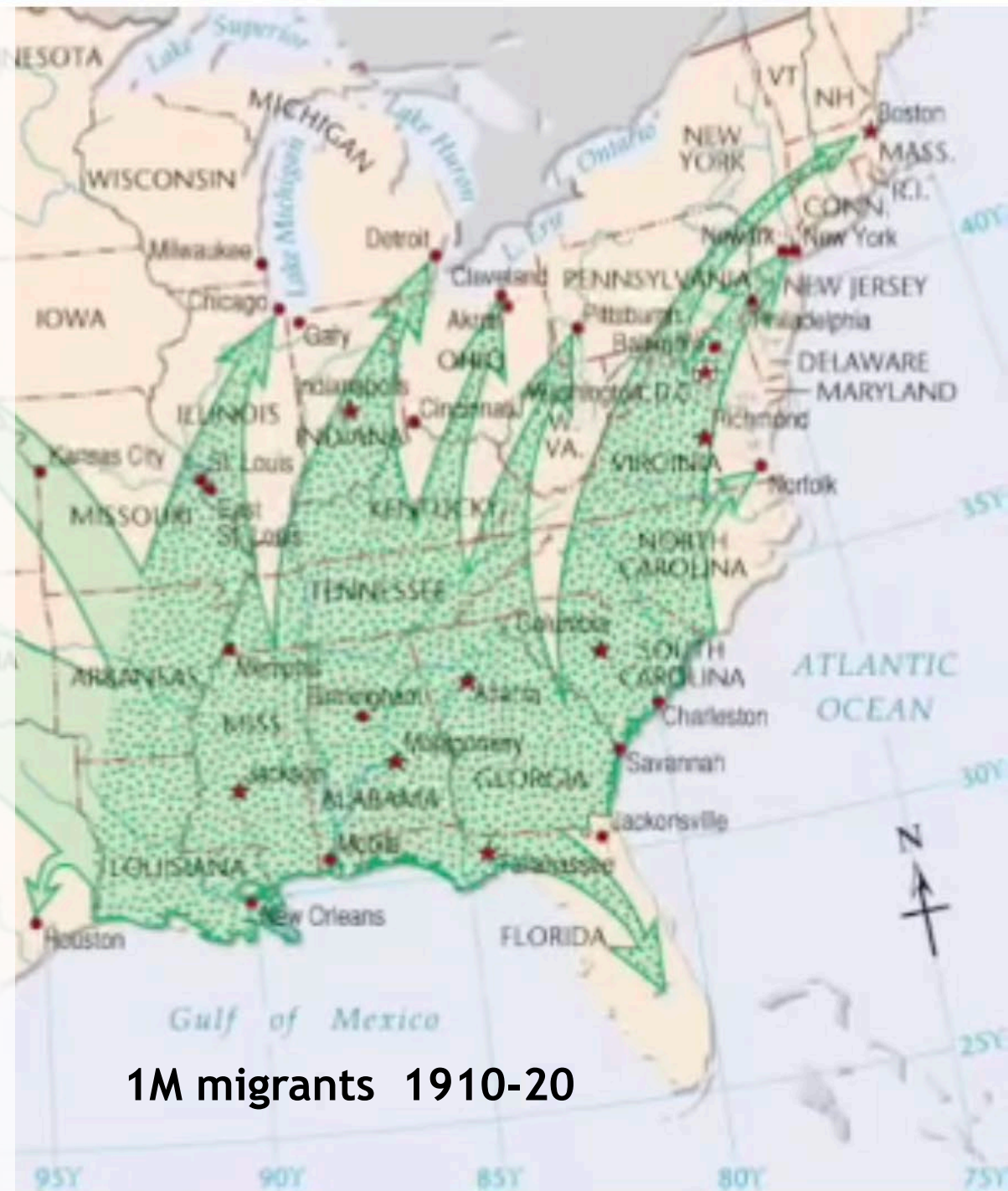
60 % Europe  
34 % Americas





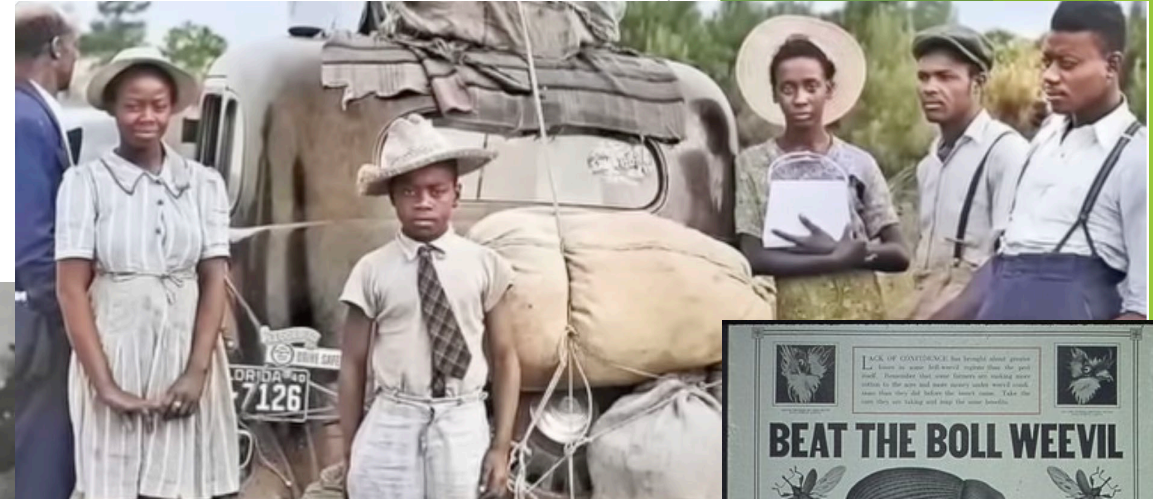
# Great Migration 1910-1940

- Black population growth
  - NYC 66%
  - Chicago 148%
  - Philadelphia 500%
  - Detroit 611%





# The Pull... and the Push





# Why Harlem?

- ▶ New York City was the final destination of the largest number of African American migrants
- ▶ Overbuilding and subway delays opened opportunities for creative developers
- ▶ Migrants tried to avoid overcrowded tenements of Hell's Kitchen



Dancing the Charleston in Harlem, 1920



- ▶ Prohibition and Tin Pan Alley opened business opportunities
- ▶ “Slumming” became popular with white pleasure-seekers



# The Business of the Color Line

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mpj8PXPOM-I>



# Hatred Stoked by Labor Resentment

May-July 1917

**St. Louis Globe-Democrat** EXTRA FINAL  
 VOL. XXXI PART ONE NO. 14108 TUESDAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1917. SIXTEEN PAGES—PRICE TWO CENTS

## 100 NEGROES SHOT, BURNED, CLUBBED TO DEATH IN E. ST. LOUIS RACE WAR

Riot at Its Height Near Broadway and Fourth as Sketched by Artist Russell



**WOMEN FAINT WHEN NEGROES ARE SHOT AS THEY FLEE FIRE**

Captive Being Dragged to Lynching Post Is Beaten Down by Rioters

**MAN-HUNTING MOBS BURN 60 HOMES AND SLAY FLEEING BLACKS BY BULLET AND ROPE**

Women and Children Join in Blood Oray as Flames

“At the hands of persons unknown”

22 May 1917

### THOUSANDS CHEERED WHEN NEGRO BURNED

Ell Persons Pays Death Penalty for Killing Girl.

OIL IS Poured ON FIRE

Mother of Antoinette Rappel

Give the news today. The others give it tomorrow.

THE WEATHER. Tonight hot and humid. Tuesday hot.

# The Bryan Daily Eagle

AND PILOT

VOL. XXXI, NO. 114 BRYAN, TEXAS, MONDAY, MAY 14, 1917 PRICE \$4.00 PER ANNUM

## FIFTEEN THOUSAND SAW NEGRO BURN

**FRESH STRAWBERRIES**

PLENTY OF THEM. NICE QUALITY.

Phone us NOW for a crate, \$1.50 for Presenting-Tuesday or Wednesday morning delivery.

All fresh fruit and vegetables in season.

**HARDY NEWTON**

**WACO PUBLIC SQUARE SCENE OF EXECUTION**

PERNITLY, SOME ONE STARTED A CRY, "GET THE NEGRO!" AND IT WAS TAKEN UP ALL OVER THE COURT ROOM. THE CROWD FIRST BEGAN YELLING TO HANG HIM

**SERVICE**

An Old Word With a New Meaning.

Fresh, Staple and Fancy Groceries

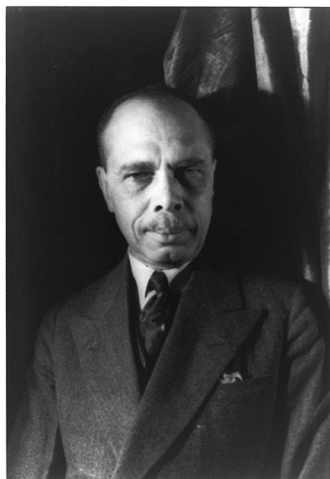
No order so large that its details escape our attention, or so small that we do not appreciate.

PHONE 54 **Reid Bros. GROCERIES** PHONE 79.





# Organized Resistance



James Weldon Johnson  
(1871-1938)  
NAACP leader & Exec Secy  
1917-30

Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882-1961)  
Literary editor, The Crisis, NAACP magazine



1914 - NAACP 6,000 members and 50 branches

10,000 march Silent Parade July 28, 1917

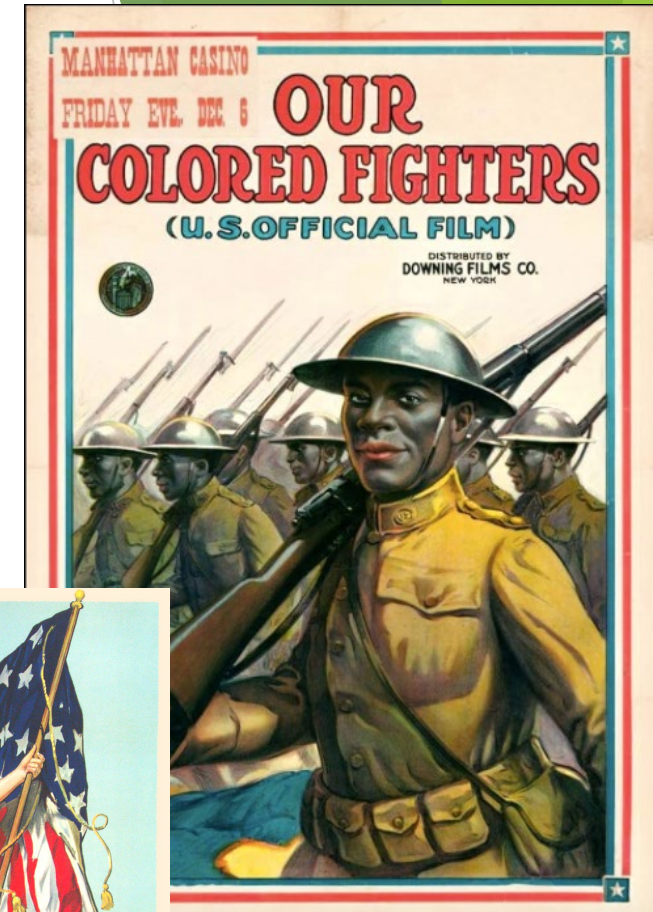
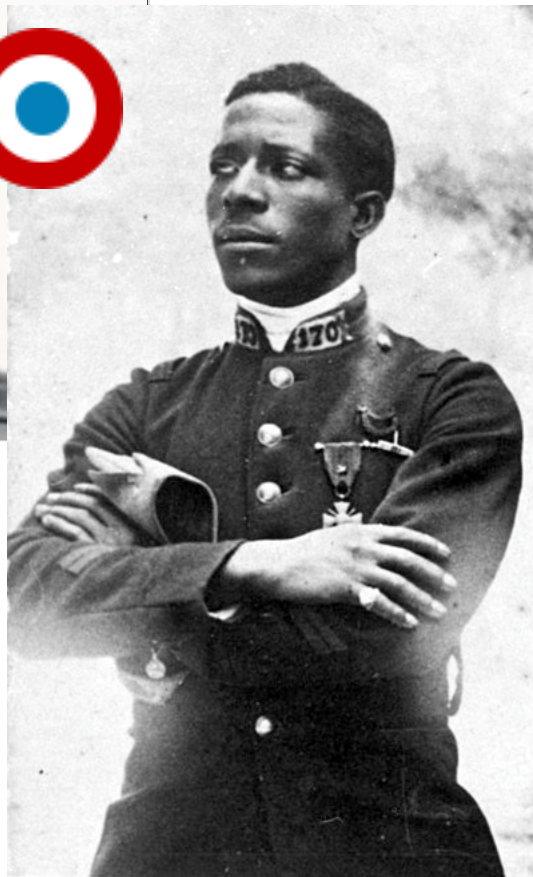
Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924)

1913: Re-segregated civil service & government workplaces



1915: Birth of a Nation shown in White House, praised by Wilson

# World War I - The Decision





# Segregation and Discrimination

...in Service,  
Promotions &  
Military Justice



Col. Charles Young



Largest Murder Trial in the History of the United States.  
Scene during Court Martial of 44 members of 24th. Infantry U.S.A.  
on trial for mutiny and murder of 17 people at Houston Tex. Aug 23, 1917.  
Trial held in Gift Chapel, Ft. Sam Houston.  
Trial started-- Nov 1, 1917. Brig Genl George K. Hunter, Presiding.  
Col. J. A. Hull - Judge Advocate. Counsel for Defense.  
Maj. D. V. Sulphin, Asst. Counsel for Defense.  
Maj. Harry S. Coker.  
Prisoners guarded by 19th. Infantry Co. C. Capt Carl J. O'Leary.  
This photo Copyrighted by W. C. Floyd, San Antonio Tex. Reproduction not allowed.



# 350,000 African Americans

[https://wwichangedus.org/all\\_resources/african-americans-in-wwi/](https://wwichangedus.org/all_resources/african-americans-in-wwi/)



# James Reese Europe & 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry



CARNEGIE HALL  
Thursday Evening - - May 2, 1912  
At 8.15 o'clock

---

**CONCERT OF NEGRO MUSIC**  
Under the auspices of  
The Music School Settlement  
for Colored People, Inc.

---

The Clef Club Orchestra  
- JAS. REESE EUROPE, Conductor;





*By the God of Heaven, we are cowards and jackasses if now that the war is over, we do not marshal every ounce of our brain and brawn to fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land.*

*We return.*

*We return from fighting.*

*We return fighting.*

*Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the United States of America, or know the reason why.*

W.E.B. Du Bois, May 1919





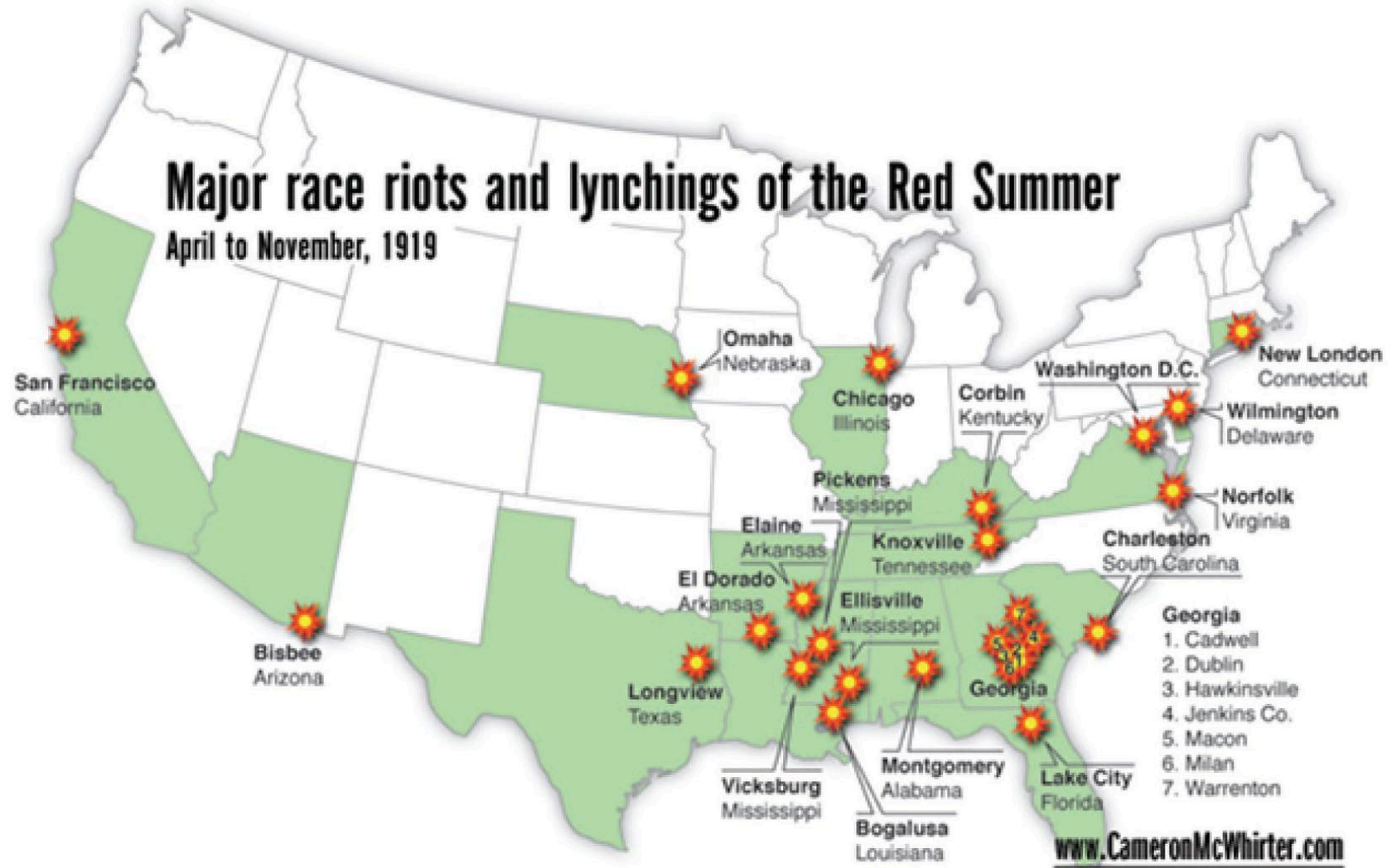
# 1919 Red Summer

**NEGROES PLAN TO  
KILL ALL WHITES**

SLAUGHTER WAS TO BEGIN WITH  
21 PROMINENT MEN AS THE  
FIRST VICTIMS.

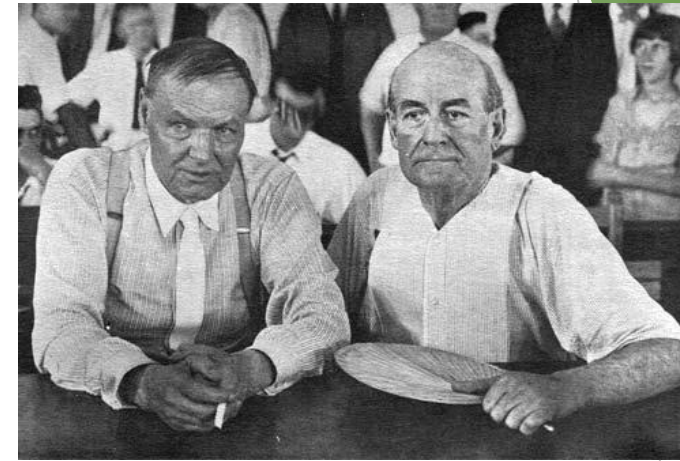
**"WE JUST BEGUN" PASSWORD**

Blacks Had Armed Themselves and  
Planned to Kill Every White  
Person in Sight When Plot  
Was Exposed.

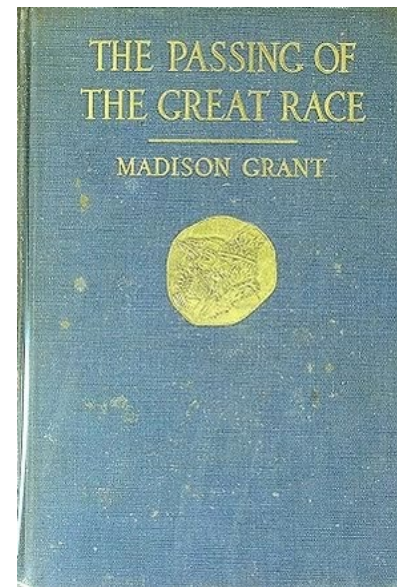


# Race, Religion and Science

- ▶ Anti Miscegenation laws (until Loving vs. Virginia, 1967)
- ▶ Compulsory sterilization (to 1981)
- ▶ Scientific Racism (to ~1950)

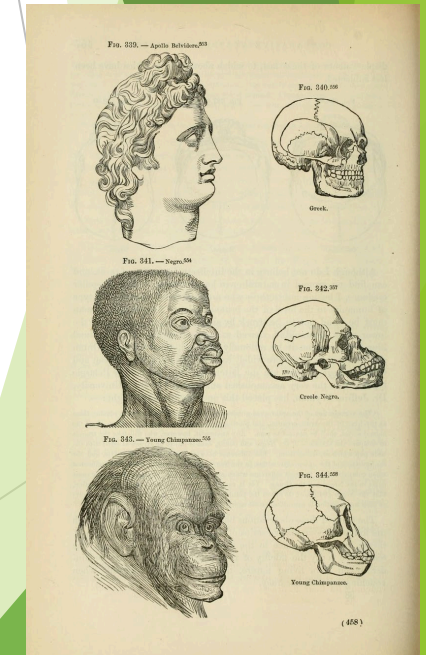


Nordic superiority  
Madison Grant, 1916



1930

The Scopes  
Monkey Trial,  
1925



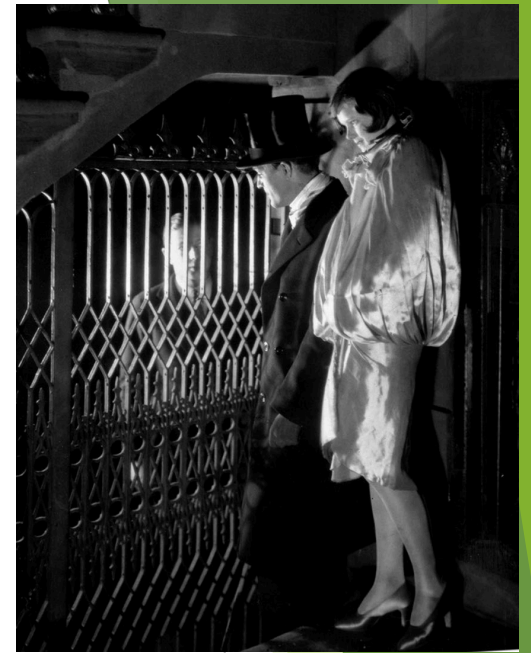
Indigenous Races of  
the Earth (1857)





# Prohibition 1920-1933

- June 30, 1919 “Thirsty-first” Wartime Prohibition
- Oct 28, 1919 - 18th Amendment & Volstead Act
- New York 1920 - 15,000 bars; 1926 - 30,000 speakeasies
- Organized crime, speakeasies, gangsters, violence and massive political corruption



# Negrophilia, Entertainment and Pan-Africanism

- ▶ Haitian Revolution and independence 1804
- ▶ Negrophilia - term used by avant garde artists
- ▶ *Les Heureux Nègres* musical review brought the cakewalk to France
- ▶ Exposition Universelle 1900 - The Exhibit of American Negroes
- ▶ Ex-soldiers remaining in European cities after WW1 as entertainers
- ▶ Pan-African Congresses

