



# Harlem RENAISSANCE

CULTURE AND INTELLECT IN THE  
HARLEM RENAISSANCE:

HOW THE AMOUNT OF  
BRAINPOWER IN THE HARLEM  
RENAISSANCE TRANSCENDED  
AFRICAN AMERICAN  
STEREOTYPES

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At the turn of the 20th century, racism was not only strong but also widely accepted. Blacks were segregated, laughed at, disrespected, and discriminated against. The advertising industry especially fostered negative stereotypes.

After the great migration, Harlem became a gathering place for intelligent, artistic African Americans. It was filled with people which led to overcrowding, but also became a space where the accomplishments of blacks were not only acknowledged, but also celebrated. There was visual art, theater, jazz, literature, and so much more. The amount of people in Harlem allowed African Americans to transcend stereotypes and be recognized for their achievements, not their skin color.

Harlem became the place where the New Negro Movement flourished due to migrating blacks moving up north to live. Historically, in the early 1900s access to housing became a major source of disputes between blacks and whites because of the segregation ordinances in New York where the main focus was to keep blacks out of white neighborhoods. The segregation ordinances were shut down by the Supreme Court in 1917. Thus, helping spark a massive great migration of African Americans to subdivisions in New York City. After the First World War, African Americans arrived in Harlem by the thousands due to the Great Migration and the need in unskilled labor, and the migration from farms to industry. The largest predominately black "city" in America after the First World War was Harlem. Therefore, Harlem became the capital of black America, attracting black artists and intellectuals from across America. Due to its bustling population and influx of artists and intellectuals, Harlem became the iconic city of the New Negro Movement. The population rise also contributed to many advantages and disadvantages. For a city no more than 1.5 square miles in area had a population of over 215,000 people, there were advantages, and disadvantages.

During the Harlem Renaissance, racism was ever present. Slavery had officially been abolished by 13th Amendment in 1864, but in no way did the freedom of African Americans translate to the equality of African Americans. Caucasians saw them as intrinsically inferior. All preconceived differences between the races were exaggerated and mocked. The more differences exist between the self and the other, the easier it is to disassociate from the other. The more disassociated the self is, the easier it is to see the other as inferior.

Advertising was used to exaggerate African Americans to the point where Caucasians could no longer see any semblance of themselves in the images. Skin became blacker, lips larger, hair frizzier. In some images, the black people were so characterized that they looked more like mythical creatures than humans. These characters were shown as poor, lazy, incompetent, and savage-like. These images were repeated so frequently that many believed them. This made it that much more difficult for African Americans to break away from the stereotypes and prove their worth in society. Luckily, they had a place to do that, and Harlem was that place.

The Harlem Renaissance has its historical origins in the Civil War and Reconstruction, despite encompassing the interwar decades of the 1920s and 30s. These decades were periods of great tension, but were nevertheless important in helping form a

unique and dynamic literary movement for African-Americans. The Jim Crow laws were a major source of this tension, as they fostered black stereotypes which permeated the American landscape, making it all the more difficult to become a successful writer. Although the number of successful black writers only amounted to a relative handful, with Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Jean Toomer being among them, the Harlem Renaissance demonstrated that black writers could produce important literary and artistic works just as white authors could. Undeniably, the movement was more about a quest for an image than anything else. The city of Harlem itself proved to be a main source for that image, even though city was not Paris or Prague. Rather, Harlem was a vibrant city teeming with a dynamic culture—a culture that writers such as McKay and Hughes captured so well. Indeed, their truthful depictions of Harlem and America undoubtedly helped carve out a unique place for black writing in American literature.

The Harlem Renaissance was the first time in American history that the African-American culture was celebrated and respected. This time period is best remembered for its nightclub music scene. The music that came during the Harlem Renaissance, specifically Jazz, revolutionized how African-Americans were viewed in society. Listeners were fascinated by the new liberating music phenomenon.

However, not everyone supported Jazz. White people called it the devil's music because of the genre's association with the African-American culture.

The jazz musicians made songs for Americans who weren't respected or recognized as equals –the poor and blacks. Not only was the music gaining popularity, it reinforced pride for African-Americans and gave whites a chance to examine the thriving culture in which they became fascinated by. Jazz was viewed as the “people's” music because it brought people together. It broke barriers and gave people an opportunity to affiliate with one another.

The jazz musicians became ambassadors for civil rights, using their fame to help aid their race towards progressive boundaries. The late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called jazz “America's triumphant music.” There is not a music genre that exists today that has made the same impact as Jazz.

In conclusion, the Great Migration helped populate Harlem with intellectuals, artists, poets, writers, and musicians who created a sense of cultural identity within the city. Unfortunately, the Harlem Renaissance helped promote stereotypes of blacks during the era. However, the Harlem Renaissance was the first time in American History that African American culture was celebrated and respected. Harlem, during this era, became the iconic city of the New Negro Movement.

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# Crowded

In Harlem

BY: ARRON JONES-WILLIAMS

The Harlem Renaissance, was also known as the New Negro Movement



## THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

### Why it is important to understand the effects of overcrowding in Harlem

#### Significance of Overcrowding

The New Negro Movement, or what was known as the Harlem Renaissance, was a “literary and intellectual flowering that fostered a new black cultural identity” (Info). The timeline of the New Negro Movement is generally observed from the 1920s to the late 1930s. “Critic and

teacher Alain Locke described the movement as a “spiritual coming of age, in which the black community is able to seize its first chance for group expression and self-determination” (Info). The Great Migration helped fuel the New Negro Movement by southern blacks moving to the north in masses and thus overpopulating Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance. The

overpopulation of Harlem had a major significance on the quality of life in Harlem during the New Negro Movement. Therefore, it is important to understand how people lived in an overpopulated Harlem and the advantages and disadvantages this overpopulation had on everyday city life, which are portrayed in both images and text of the time period.

“The timeline of the New Negro Movement is generally observed from the 1920s to the late 1930s”...

## A Background on Harlem

Harlem is a sub-division city located in the city of New York, New York. Before the First World War, Harlem was a predominately white sub-division neighborhood. “Housing executives planned to create neighborhoods in Harlem designed specifically for white workers who wanted to commute to the city” (Biography). However, the executives did not plan on housing growing rapidly. This lack of planning resulted in many, many people migrating to Harlem more rapidly than the transportation necessary to bring residents into the downtown area. Thus, once an exclusive neighborhood was abandoned by the white-middle class and developers were forced to deal with low property values (Biography). The low property values helped black real estate agents (Philip A. Payton, John E. Nail, Henry C. Parker) buy many properties in Harlem. These real estate agents began to rent exclusively to blacks. In fact, a large block along 135<sup>th</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue was bought by various African-American realtors and a church group (Harlem Wikipedia). “Meanwhile, the re-development and gratification of midtown pushed many blacks out of the Metropolitan area, resulting in African Americans moving to Harlem ‘en masse’” (Biography). This iconic sub-division of New York was the ideal growing grounds for the New Negro

Movement, because many African Americans migrated to the north from the south during the Great Migration. The Great Migration helped fuel Harlem’s population boost during the first half of the twentieth century.

## The Great Migration

The Great Migration describes the massive migration of southern blacks up to northern cities. The migration was fueled by the increasing injustices in the south due to the Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court case that declared racial segregation to be constitutionally acceptable (Biography). Therefore, blacks were increasingly depressed in the south. The main turning point for southern blacks was when boll weevils (insects) destroyed most of the southern cotton crops, creating a crippling economic depression (Biography). This depression, combined with the increase in northern manufacturing jobs due to the war, motivated blacks to migrate to northern cities for jobs and a better life financially and socially since the north was less strict on segregation. The industrial revolution fueled this phenomenon, which became known as the Great Migration. “In addition, the North also granted all adult men with the right to vote; provided better educational advancement for African-Americans and their children” (Biography). The Great

Migration brought more than seven million African Americans to the north (Biography).

## How Crowded Was Harlem?

The sub-division of Harlem became an African-American neighborhood in the early 1900s (Harlem). After the First World War, African Americans arrived in Harlem by the thousands, contributing to an already bustling society. Due to the war, the migration of laborers from Europe declined heavily, and the need for unskilled labor rose due to the war efforts (Harlem). As many as 1.5 million African Americans during the Great Migration came from the south up north to escape sharecropping, and peonage. Therefore, after the war, many African Americans took unskilled labor jobs in cities up north. For example, during the 1910s and 1920s, Chicago’s black population grew by 148 percent; Detroit by 611 percent; Cleveland’s by 307 percent (Digital). The largest predominantly black “city” at the time was Harlem (Digital). During the 1920s, “Harlem became the capital of black America, attracting black intellectuals and artists from across the country and the Caribbean (Harlem Wikipedia). Soon, the Harlem Renaissance was in full bloom” (Harlem Wikipedia). This great influx of people contributed to the view of Harlem as ...

<i>They took the road in Waycross, Georgia</i>	<i>A wrench of heart from Goree Island To a place called</i>	
<i>Skipped over the tracks in East St. Louis</i>	<i>Harlem...</i>	
<i>Took the bus from Holly Springs</i>	<i>Harlem was a promise</i>	
<i>Hitched a ride from Gee's Bend</i>	<i>Of a better life, Of a place where a man</i>	<i>"Harlem" by Walter Dean Myers</i>
<i>Took the long way through Memphis</i>	<i>Didn't have to know his place</i>	
<i>The third deck down from Trinidad</i>	<i>Simply because He was Black</i>	

## Way Too Crowded... in Harlem

**"215,000+  
People lived  
there per square  
mile"**

### How Crowded Was Harlem?

...being overcrowded, and as a sub-division of New York, having a population of 200,000+ in an area no more than a few square miles in size: it was (Harlem Wikipedia). In summary, the Great Migration helped move African Americans from the south, up north; as a result, northern cities, like Harlem, were very overcrowded with people. In fact, Harlem was the most overcrowded predominately African American city in the United States during that particular time period because 215,000+ people lived there per square mile (in comparison 200,000 people per square mile live in Manhattan today) (Haarlem). .

### Poetry and Crowdedness

The massive population of Harlem can be attributed to

African Americans looking forward to migrating north and the opportunities that would await them in Harlem. In fact, Harlem poet Walter Dean Myers explains it best in his poem "Harlem". Walter Dean Myers is explaining the reality of being black in the south in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Blacks suffered strict segregation laws in the south after the Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court case that upheld segregation and deeming it constitutional. Being black in the south was miserable, that is why many blacks moved up north during the Great Migration. The north was a promise of better life for African Americans; "a place where a man, didn't have to know his place." Blacks were treated much better in the north than in the south. Segregation was more "relaxed" up north and not as strict as southern segregation (Kurahulanda).



## Advantages:

"Harlem...attracted many intellectuals to the city... the abundance of intellectuals helped grow Harlem culturally...."

"Nightlife"

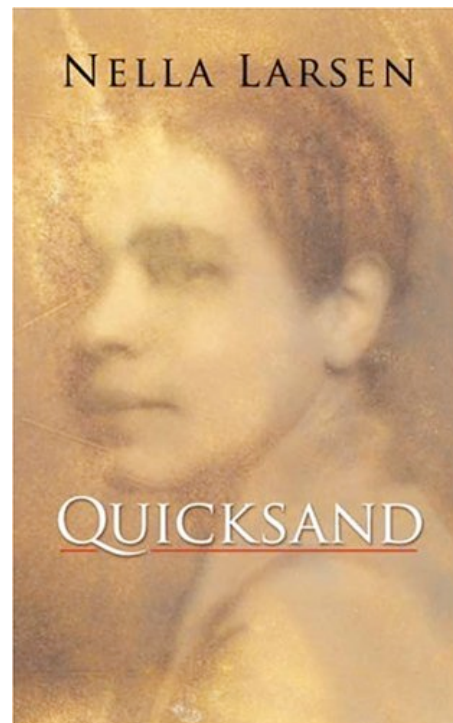
"Rent Parties"

"Intellectual Parties"

"Cultural Literature"

"City Cultural Identity"

Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*



### Advantage of Living in an Overcrowded Harlem

Overcrowded Harlem had more advantages for its residents than relaxed segregation. For instance, one advantage of an overcrowded city is the ability to find help when needed. This ability can be explained through Eleanora Tate's book "Celeste's Harlem Renaissance", in which, the main character finds financial assistance for her rent by asking her neighbors. The neighbors threw a rent "party" for Celeste on a Saturday and raised enough money to prevent her belongings from "being thrown out of her house by her landlord on Sunday." This example of a "rent party" is referenced to in other articles, for instance, the concept is defined in TruTV's "Harlem..." article as: "community parties that were commonly held on weekends to raise enough money to pay the landlord" (TruTV). Another advantage of Harlem being overcrowded during the New Negro Movement is that it attracted many intellectuals to the city. The abundance of intellectuals helped grow Harlem culturally and Harlem had many intellectual parties as Nella Larsen's novel "Quicksand" points out. Helga Crane, the main character in *Quicksand*, goes to many intellectual parties during her time in Harlem. In fact, the nightlife of the time was another advantage also. The abundance of intellectuals helped iconize Harlem during the New Negro Movement. Additionally, the abundance of intellectuals and artists in Harlem help contribute to many literary pieces, and art pieces of cultural significance during the renaissance. For example, Jacob Lawrence's "Migration Series" has become the symbol of the Great Migration (Phillips Collection). Not only did Jacob Lawrence depict the Great Migration, but he even created artwork that displayed the over crowdedness...



"Community parties that were commonly held on weekends to raise enough money to pay the landlord on Sunday..." - Definition of "Rent Party"





## "Brownstones"

by Jacob Lawrence

### Advantages Continued...

...of Harlem. The painting above is entitled "Brownstones." Jacob Lawrence depicts the crowdedness of Harlem. The painting depicts over 30 people between three residential buildings. The fact that no one is smiling in the painting brings me to the conclusion that not everything about an overcrowded city is an advantage.

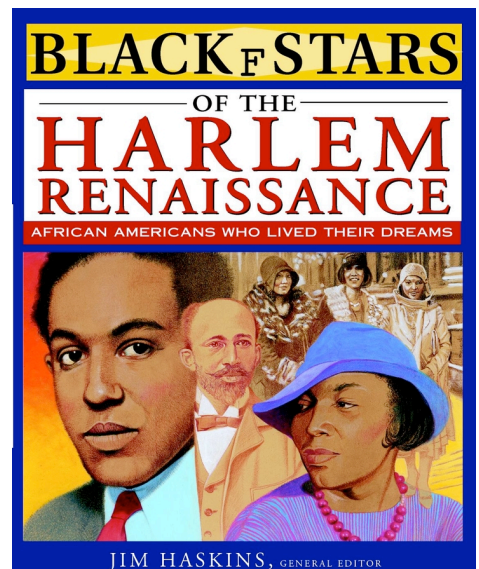
### Disadvantages to Crowded Harlem

There were many disadvantages to living in overcrowded Harlem. Times were hard for the black population living in Harlem during the New Negro Movement. 215,000+ people

were crammed into an area 50 blocks long and 8 blocks wide (TruTV). In fact, the place was so overcrowded that "many people had to sleep in shifts... one would return from work to sleep, while another would vacate the bed to go to work, keeping the bed warm for the next occupant" (TruTV). The whole bed situation describes how dense the population of Harlem was. In fact, the population density of Harlem was the highest population density of any African American city during the New Negro Movement. Living situations were so crowded that scholars believe that over 5,000 people lived per block in Harlem.

"Many people had to sleep in shifts... one would return from work to sleep, while another would vacate the bed to go to work, keeping the bed warm for the next occupant..."

**tru** TV



## Disadvantages:

"Lack of good paying Jobs"

"Too crowded..."

"Notorious landlords"

"Prohibition crime"

"Crime increased along with the population increase"



## Jobs?

"Jobs as janitors, servants, bootblacks, cooks, houseboys and baggage handlers were the typical jobs for blacks in Harlem..."



"Midsummer Night" by Palmer Hayden

## "Midsummer Night"

Palmer Hayden's "Midsummer Night" best depicts the population density of Harlem. In Palmer's image, one can see over 40 people crammed outside in a one block radius. This abundance of people helps promote the ideal of people sleeping in shifts and helps visualize the overcrowdedness of Harlem during the era.

## Lack of Good Paying Jobs

Another disadvantage of overcrowded Harlem was the lack of available jobs. Most work available to "Harlemites" was low-paying, menial jobs (TruTV). Jobs as janitors, servants, bootblacks, cooks, houseboys and baggage handlers were the typical jobs for blacks in Harlem (TruTV). These jobs hardly paid them enough to live on, and typically much less than any white person was paid for doing the same job. The good "skilled" jobs were typically made "unavailable" to black workers and granted to white workers, however, some blacks did manage to open nightclubs, restaurants, and taverns that catered to Harlem's black population (TruTV). In summary, mostly unskilled jobs were available to African Americans during the Harlem Renaissance. The jobs that were available, unfortunately, did not pay well enough for people to make a decent living off of their wages. In conclusion, a major disadvantage of living in Harlem during the New Negro Movement was the lack of skilled job offerings to the black population.





**James Mercer Langston Hughes** (February 1, 1902 – May 22, 1967) was an American poet, social activist, novelist, playwright, and columnist. He was one of the earliest innovators of the then-new literary art form Jazz Poetry. Hughes is best known for his work during the Harlem Renaissance. He famously wrote about the period that "Harlem was in vogue." - From Wikipedia "Langston

## Landlords and Langston Hughes

The lack of good paying jobs combined by high rent practices by landlords created a hard living situation in Harlem. Since Harlem was overcrowded, many landlords did not hesitate to evict tenants out because they knew that people needed housing in the overcrowded city. In fact, most of the housing available in Harlem at the time of the New Negro Movement was rental properties that were ruled by landlords (Kurahulanda). Harlem landlords were notorious for evicting people, even poet Langston Hughes writes about landlords negatively in his poem "The Ballad of The Landlord" which is displayed in the column to the right.



Young Langston Hughes

### Analysis of "The Ballad of The Landlord"

Langston Hughes depicts a neglectful landlord who only cares about tenants paying the rent and not about fixing up the housing people are paying for. Hughes points out that the landlord is not afraid to evict tenants when they don't pay their rent. Additionally, he describes the landlord practice of throwing tenants possession's out in the street, exactly what the main character in Eleanora Tate's book "Celeste's Harlem Renaissance" fears would happen to her if she didn't pay her rent to the landlord. In summary, landlords in Harlem were notorious for throwing people's possessions out on the street and evicting families without thinking twice about it.

*Landlord, landlord,  
My roof has sprung a leak.  
Don't you 'member I told you  
about it  
Way last week?*

*Landlord, landlord,  
These steps is broken down.  
When you come up yourself  
It's a wonder you don't fall down.*

*Ten Bucks you say I owe you?  
Ten Bucks you say is due?  
Well, that's Ten Bucks more'n I'll  
pay you  
Till you fix this house up new.*

*What? You gonna get eviction  
orders?  
You gonna cut off my heat?  
You gonna take my furniture and  
Throw it in the street?*

*Um-huh! You talking high and  
mighty.  
Talk on-till you get through.  
You ain't gonna be able to say a  
word  
If I land my fist on you.*

*Police! Police!  
Come and get this man!  
He's trying to ruin the government  
And overturn the land!*

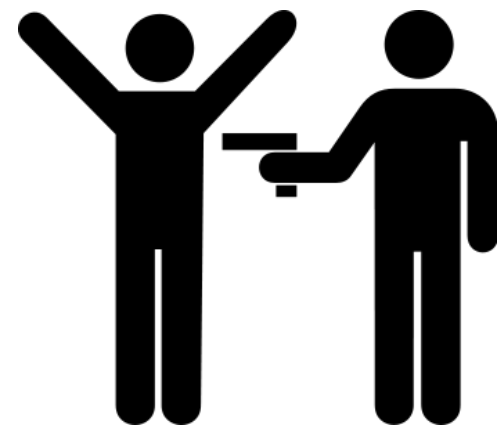
*Copper's whistle!  
Patrol bell!  
Arrest.  
Precinct Station.  
Iron cell.  
Headlines in press:  
Man Threatens landlord  
Tenant Held Bail  
Judge Gives Negro 90 Days In  
County Jail!*





New York City was famous for its gangsters and the Mob's control over the illegal alcohol market -

**tru**TV™



## Crime... A Major Disadvantage

Besides the lack of jobs, and the notorious landlords, the most obvious disadvantage was crime. The Harlem Renaissance happened during the period of prohibition (TruTV). The period of prohibition is notorious for its crime and gang violence. The epicenter of gang violence was Harlem because the cabarets and night clubs were the best locations to sell alcohol during the prohibition era when alcohol was deemed "illegal" (TruTV). Mob bosses knew about the bustling city and how its floundering businesses could be taken advantage of. Mob bosses saw the transportation of illegal liquor from across the Canadian border into New York as a lucrative business and it was. Nightlife in Harlem was

flourishing with sales of "illegal" alcohol. Mob bosses controlled the club owners and used gangs as their "police force" (TruTV). Eventually, black gangs got into the business and began to create their own "police force" to rival Mob bosses. Gangs even raised money in a "homemade" lottery system where a gang member would come up to your doorstep to sell numbers, and later on the winner would collect the gang's lottery prize. Basically, crime in the city grew exponentially and living in Harlem during the New Negro Movement meant that you saw an obvious mob and gang presence (TruTV). In summary, the prohibition era brought organized crime to the very doorsteps of many residents of Harlem. Harlem's location and nightlife brought about a serious influx of criminal activity.

## "Prohibition"

"The national ban on the sale, manufacture, and transportation of alcohol that took place from 1920 to 1933..."

**tru**TV™



125th Street in Harlem

## Harlem Was Overcrowded...

In conclusion, Harlem during the New Negro Movement was overcrowded. Over 200,000 people lived in a small area less than two square miles apart. The city flourished from African Americans coming from the south up north to live. Due to its bustling population and influx of intellectuals and artists from across America, Harlem became the iconic city of the New Negro Movement. However, there were disadvantages to the massive population. For example, there was a lack of skilled jobs, eviction-loving notorious landlords, and organized crime which played an everyday

presence in people's lives.

Though, the massive population did not stop Harlem from having its advantages, such as; relaxed segregation, neighborhood rent parties, good nightlife, and the fact that Harlem attracted many intellectuals.

All in all, Harlem was the place to be during the New Negro Movement, and many people knew this because Harlem was forever "growing" during that time period.



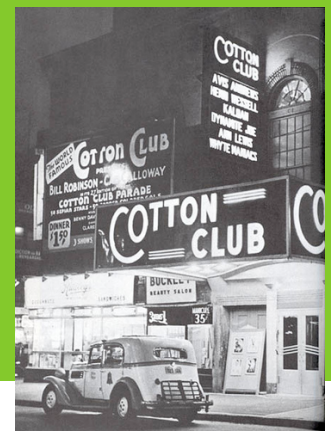
## Harlem:

A place where over 200,000 people lived, in a two square mile radius.

Harlem = Overcrowded  
Harlem = Filled with intellectuals

Harlem = Rent Parties  
Harlem = Unskilled Jobs  
Harlem = Relaxed Segregation  
Harlem = Nightlife  
Harlem = Cotton Club  
Harlem = Cultural identity  
Harlem = Icon of the New Negro Movement

Harlem = Home to many people who defined an era



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# Advertising As A Tool To Perpetuate Stereotypes

WRITTEN BY NATASHA LANGSDORF



Advertising has long since been used as a tool to get a message across. That message is often brand related- buy our product! See our movie! However, it can also be used indirectly as a means to either change society or keep the status quo.

During the early 1900s, advertising used racist imagery, misleading media, and repetition to keep alive stereotypes about African Americans.

# Content

## Racism Through De-Humanization

As soon as the first Africans arrived in America in the 1700s, they were seen as inferior. This was used as both a coping technique and a justification for slavery. It's much more okay to enslave a person if that person is innately lesser than you. The masters were helping the slaves, of course, by offering them a place to live and an "honest" day's work. The poor things couldn't make it on their own! Southerners used this explanation during the American Revolutionary War.

For some, inferiority wasn't enough. In those cases, blacks were de-humanized. They transformed from lesser people to not people at all. In *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad's narrator describes his experience with so-called "savages"

But suddenly, as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping. of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

In this passage, the Africans ceased to be human, instead merging with the vegetation and landscape. Extremities are spoken about individually, as if they are separate entities, not body parts. Everything is happening under a thick coat of foliage, as if arms were branches, torsos trunks, and feet roots. Conrad acknowledges the lack of understand he has of the culture, an admittance that normally would be humbling, but is instead demeaning. When he compares the experience to that of an "outbreak in a madhouse," he compares it to people who act and think so differently from society that they must be contained in order to keep them from harming "normal" people.

As Conrad continues, he struggles with the fact that the Africans may, in fact, be human, and therefore like him.

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Conrad's narrator sees the Africans are people. He tries to repress it, but he sees it nonetheless. It's difficult to remove all humanity from "creatures" that share the physical characteristic humans have. Sure, there often are differences: darker skin, bigger lips, coarser hair, but the human characteristics cannot be forgotten. In the animal world, major differences in species exist; cats, for example, can have long hair or short hair, pointy ears or round ears, white fur or black fur. Still, there is an intrinsic quality that all cats have- the thing that makes them cats. Like all species, humans have a fundamental attribute that makes them human, no matter what.

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The more differences exist between the self and the other, the easier it is to disassociate from the other. The more disassociated the self is, the easier it is to see the other as inferior. We care about our own race a great deal because we see ourselves in our race. We care about other races because we see our self, albeit less of it. We care about animals less and less as the similarities lessen: we teach apes how to speak sign language; we care for dogs as pets; and we go fishing for sport, sometimes killing for food, sometimes for fun, sometimes just wounding and releasing. Plants grow, breed, and are alive, so we hold demonstrations to "save the trees." Inanimate objects, especially unnatural objects, are at the very bottom.

In the early twentieth century, the advertising industry capitalized on the perceived differences between Caucasians and African Americans. Blacks were represented as lazy, unintelligent, poor, and ignorant. Physical features were exaggerated. During this time period a large amount of images in print advertising were drawn by hand, so black people did not have to look like themselves, they looked the way artist chose to depict them. In the article *Popular Art and Racism: Embedding Racial Stereotypes in the American Mindset-- Jim Crow and Popular Culture*, Ronald Davis discusses the accentuation of stereotypical African American features in advertising:

The image of black people in the white mind focused on outrageous depictions of individual blacks and their assumed cultural practices. Countless representations of impoverished blacks with ink-black skin, large thick red lips, and bulging eyeballs appeared almost everywhere in the public arena...

Ronald Davis

## Stereotyping In Print Advertisements

In this image, O'baby Chocolate Dairy Drink is being advertised. A small African American boy is drinking straight from the bottle. He is licking his lips and saying "Ain't dat sumptin'!"

This image may at first appear simple, but it contains a massive amount of racism and stereotypes. Some are obvious- the boy's manner of speech shows him as uneducated, and his large, red lips, white eyes, and dark brown skin make him look as far from Caucasian as possible. Overall, his appearance is quite creepy, more like an imp or a little devil than a boy. His hat is too large for his head, showing him as poor, since he can't afford one that fits him properly. He is drinking straight from the bottle and licking his lips, behaviors seen as impolite. This implies that he behaves like a savage, either refusing or unable to conform to the rules of society.



Viniola Soap used the image of a small white girl and a small white boy standing on the beach together. The girl is confused as to why the boy is darker than she, and thinks she knows a solution. "You dirty boy! Why don't you wash yourself with Viniola Soap?"

There is nothing subtle about the racism in the advertisement. It treats dark skin like a condition to be fixed. Even the image of the black boy is drawn so that he is inferior. The white girl has tights, shoes, long sleeves, and a hat, while he is only wearing a thin jumper. It is possible that the "boy" in question is actually a girl, but the white girl has never seen a girl with such short hair.



African Americans became comic relief. Consumers laughed at the images of them attempting, and failing, to perform either basic or “white” tasks and activities. They would fall over when ice-skating, sink when swimming, and sit backwards when horseback riding. Some characters were reoccurring, such as the “Gold Dust Twins”, a pair of pickannies who “cleaned” the house by spilling powder and generally making a bigger mess than the one they were attempting to clean up. These characters were very well liked; Americans loved to see what hijinx they were up to. Popular characters were rendered in figurines, on toys, and on plates and glasses, to name a few.



## The Mammy Character

One well-loved character was Aunt Jemima, a large, opinionated African American who represented the “Mammy” archetype. Mammies were African American slaves or servants with complete dedication to their white family. They were more outspoken than the usual black slave or servant, and were often bold enough to scold or tell their masters and mistresses what to do. This was not considered out of place, since it was always in order to protect. She knew what was best for the family, since she cared and loved them so much.

A round, black, shiny face is hers, so glossy as to suggest the idea that she might have been washed over with the whites of eggs, like one of her own tea rusks. Her whole plump countenance beams with satisfaction and contentment from under a well-starched checkered turban, bearing on it; however, if we must confess it, a little of that tinge of self-consciousness which becomes the first cook of the neighborhood, as Aunt Chloe was universally held and acknowledged to be.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, Uncle Tom’s Cabin

Mammies are more complicated because they were not *intended* as racist or demeaning. They were loved by families, and were considered as almost a part of the family. The issue was that the relationship was seen as mutually beneficial. Mammy was shown as someone who cared more about her white family than her biological family or even herself.

In “*Imitation of Life*,” a 1934 movie, Aunt Deliah, the Mammy figure, gives her mistress, Miss Bea, a secret pancake recipe. Miss Bea goes on to make a pancake company that uses the recipe. In return, she offers Aunt Deliah twenty percent of the company profits. If this movie was true to life, Aunt Deliah would either accept the offer or demand more- it was her recipe, after all! Instead, she becomes fearful that it means she must leave her

“You'll have your own car. Your own house,” Miss Bea tells Aunt Delilah. Mammy is frightened. “My own house? You gonna send me away, Miss Bea? I can't live with you? Oh, Honey Chile, please don't send me away. How I gonna take care of you and Miss Jessie if I ain't here... I'se your cook. And I want to stay your cook, I gives it to you, Honey. I makes you a present of it”  
*Imitation of Life*

Movies such as *Imitation of Life* helped the success of Aunt Jemima. Aunt Deliah was a mammy who cared deeply and wanted the best for her family, so Aunt Jemima must be as well. Why would the pancakes Aunt Jemima sold be anything but the best?

In reality, Mammies rarely existed, especially not as slaves. Catherine Clinton, a historian, said that: “....The Mammy was created

by white Southerners to redeem the relationship between black women and white men within slave society in response to the antislavery attack from the North during the ante-bellum period”. Years later, they were used to market numerous products- everything from food, to soap, to laxatives, complete with a crude, half naked image of a bent over Mammy releasing gas.



# VISIT OUR SODA FOUNT.

# Coca-Cola

We purchase our COCA-COLA direct from the manufacturers and no shoddy substitutes are ever permitted to go into our fountain. If you are weary there is nothing so refreshing. It exhilarates and enlivens body and mind. We claim the best drinks in the city. You will have prompt, polite and careful attention at our fountain



## Why Advertisements Made Such a Large Impact

The negative portrayal of blacks in American advertising played a key role in perpetuating the oppression of blacks in society during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Advertising is a method of creating interest in a product by drawing the attention of the public. A popular way that companies create this interest is by creating an image for themselves that will inspire a bond between customer and product. It is difficult, for example, to find a person who does not recognize the Coca-Cola logo and know what product it represents. Advertisers have notoriously used stereotypes to forge a sense of relatability to their customers. Additionally, the use of stereotypes, especially with regards to race, have been used to produce an element of comedy in advertisements. The use of black stereotypes was no exception. The widespread viewership that that these advertisements received increased the spread of these stereotypes exponentially. It got to a point where the stereotypes were repeated so frequently that they were seen as indisputable facts- a fact that made disproving them all the more difficult.



## We'll all be dust in the end

Georgia Douglas Johnson, a poet, addresses segregation and racism in her poem, Common Dust. Johnson was an American poet and journalist from Georgia who came from mixed race ancestry: African American, Native American, and English.



MRS. G. D. JOHNSON

And who shall separate the dust  
What later we shall be:  
Whose keen discerning eye will scan  
And solve the mystery?

The high, the low, the rich, the poor,  
The black, the white, the red,  
And all the chromatic between,  
Of whom shall it be said:

Here lies the dust of Africa;  
Here are the sons of Rome;  
Here lies the one unlabeled,  
The world at large his home!

Can one then separate the dust?  
Will mankind lie apart,  
When life has settled back again  
The same as from the start?

Georgia Douglas Johnson's poem is very eye opening. It points out the absolute ridiculousness of the hatred, stereotyping, and de-humanization of the other, when everyone will end up as dust, indistinguishable from one other in the end. White Americans worked so hard to keep blacks inferior through exaggeration, repletion, and misinformation, all of which was fueled by advertising. Luckily, in Harlem, there were those who were able to disprove the stereotypes and create many forms of intelligent, beautiful, and *finally* recognized art.

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BY JAMES  
GEIGER



# the HARLEM renaissance

## The Harlem Renaissance Literary Movement: Moving Forward

The Harlem Renaissance had its origins in the Civil War and Reconstruction, despite encompassing the interwar decades of the 1920s and 1930s. One of the results of abolition was the Great Migration, which saw a large number of blacks relocate from the South to other parts of the United States—particularly to urban areas such as Harlem. An additional result, albeit negative, was the implementation of Jim Crow laws by many Southern states, highlighted by the enactment of de-jure segregation and the ideology of “separate but equal.” Even though the Jim Crow laws seemed to be equalizing, they were far from it, as they helped purport “the racist characterization of black people as culturally, personally, and biologically inferior” (Davis)<sup>1</sup>. In many ways, the Harlem Renaissance helped counter such racism by demonstrating that blacks could produce important works of art and of literature. This is not to say that the Harlem Renaissance was a uniform movement, as there were varying opinions on what black art and literature actually was, but rather that there was a momentum propelling black art and literature to respectability. While the Jim Crow laws did not end with the Harlem Renaissance in the 1930s, they were weakened by the achievements of its artists and writers, helping to counteract racist characterizations and black stereotypes that existed.

1. Information taken from: Pilgrim, David. “What Was Jim Crow?” *The Jim Crow Museum*. Web. 14 Nov. 2011.

The Jim Crow laws were undeniably racist in nature, but cannot be ignored for that reason, as they were nevertheless an important aspect of American culture. This is especially true after the turn of the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, where there is a re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and an increase in the lynching of blacks in the South. Indeed, the Jim Crow laws fed off racism, largely resting on old stereotypical images associated with minstrel shows and vaudeville theatre. These performances helped portray blacks as ignorant and silly, while commercials during the early 1900s often exaggerated the physical appearance of blacks (e.g. with ink-black skin, large thick red lips, and bulging eyeballs) to likewise achieve a comic effect. Perhaps the most well recognized examples of these stereotypes are seen in the 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* and the 1939 film *Gone with the Wind*, with the former depicting blacks in the vein of minstrel shows and the latter depicting them as faithful and loyal servants (i.e. Mammy and Prissy). It is even believed that Hattie McDaniel, the actress who played Mammy, won her Oscar *because* her role was an acceptable black image for many white viewers (Davis). Not coincidentally, the idea of acceptability is important to the Harlem Renaissance as well, as many of its artists and writers often went against the “white view,” crafting their own unique viewpoints.

In his article “The Harlem Literary Renaissance,” Frances Keller makes this very case, noting that “Jim Crow legislation...compelled Negroes to live and act like slaves if they stayed in the South...so many went North [by the hundreds of thousands]” (Keller 29). The exodus referred to here is the Great Migration that occurred from 1910 to 1930, in which cities such as New York became populated with African-Americans. Not incidentally, this presented blacks with an opportunity to better define their race—indeed, Keller states that “the Harlem Literary Renaissance of the 1920’s was a quest for an image” (Keller 29). The quest was a rather difficult one during the time, especially when considering the racial tensions that existed throughout the span of the Harlem Renaissance. If anything, the art and literature produced during the Harlem Renaissance demonstrated to the rest of America that blacks could produce unique and important works just as white authors and artists could. This was easier said than done however, since the struggle was largely uphill for authors who were trying to get both recognized and published; even for a gifted writer such as Jean Toomer.



# Jean Toomer



Although Toomer's most canonical work is *Cane*, the book was overlooked during the Harlem Renaissance because many critics feel it was published too soon and fell victim to discrimination. In *Cane*, Toomer (pictured on the right) structures the book as a series of vignettes or short essays, capturing the question of what it meant to be an African American during the time. The vignette structure allows the setting to change throughout the book (it goes between the South and the North, with the last section dealing with racism in the South). Incidentally, *Cane* does not draw from the concept of the "Old Negro," but focuses on the contemporary (Hutchinson 383). It was written by a black person *for* black people and does not have the Old Negro ideas and negative stereotypes embedded in it, nor does it depict black life in Harlem the way white audiences would have wanted to see it. Toomer achieves this by heralding the death of the South and the old black spirituals—that is, the book celebrates black heritage, almost as if saying blacks should not be ashamed. In the Afterword, Toomer notes:

**I learned that the Negroes of the town [Sparta] objected to [folk-songs and spirituals]. They called them 'shouting.' They had victrolas and player-pianos. So, I realized with deep regret, that the spirituals, meeting ridicule, would be certain to die out. With Negroes also the trend was towards the small town and then towards the city—and industry and commerce and machines. The folk-spirit was walking in to die on the modern desert. That spirit was so beautiful. Its death so tragic. (Toomer 210)**

Toomer's message is thus that blacks should not be ashamed of their race, but should be more appreciative of their own beauty. This logic is similar to Claude McKay's views, but the difference rests in the fact that McKay's works were not as uplifting (which is *not* to say that they were not important works of literature).

“Just as Toomer was not afraid of the past (e.g. spirituals and folk-songs), Johnson acts similarly, as this painting conveys the idea that he does not give in to stereotypes and is not afraid to express art how he sees it.”



A painting that goes along with Toomer’s views on race and culture is one by William Henry Johnson, entitled *Street Musicians*. This image depicts two African-American male street performers in a seemingly simplistic way. Yet, the painting is very complex because it expounds an abstract quality that speaks volumes without using words. While the abstract quality could be seen as negative, as some may say this helps perpetuate black stereotypes in terms of physical appearance (the men have exaggerated features; specifically large mouths), this could also be seen as the dawn of a unique artistic style, one that is indicative of the vibrant and new culture associated with the Harlem Renaissance. Just as Toomer was not afraid of the past (e.g. spirituals and folk-songs), Johnson acts similarly, as this painting conveys the idea that he does not give in to stereotypes and is not afraid to express art.

### *Street Musicians* by William Henry Johnson



This fits into the divide between black intellectuals during the Harlem Renaissance, explained by George Hutchinson in his book *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*. Hutchinson notes that “African-American

intellectuals were more enslaved to bourgeois ‘Anglo-Saxon’ conventions than were intellectuals of the predominantly white left because of their reaction against racial stereotypes” (Hutchinson 131). Writers such as Toomer were vitally important to the black literary movement *because* they were unafraid to interact with white publishers and writers. Hutchinson elaborates that McKay was especially unafraid of white criticism and advocated that “black writers needed good, honest criticism, not patronizing indulgence,” while he also notes that both Toomer and McKay were “men [who] straddled the threshold of social difference and journeyed *between* white and black intellectual communities” (Hutchinson 132). This sheds light on the unpopularity of *Cane* because it demonstrates that regardless of monetary success and popularity, Toomer was working to advance black literature even while he was being heavily criticized. Similarly, McKay worked for literary equality, but many black intellectuals felt his work was too negative and rejected it.

## The Painter Who Paints - Palmer Hayden



The work which best encapsulates McKay is the novel he wrote in 1928, entitled *Home to Harlem*. This novel depicts Harlem for what it was and how McKay saw it (i.e. reality).

McKay does not compromise the truth in this novel nor does he paint Harlem as the holy grail of black cities. Rather, *Home to Harlem* goes into detail about Harlem nightlife; content seen as negative by many (including W.E.B. Du Bois, who denounced the book when it first came out), but nevertheless truthful. The book itself centers on two black men and details their struggles to survive, leaving no stone unturned so to speak. *Home to Harlem* is similar in this respect to the painting *The Painter Who Paints* by Palmer Hayden, shown on the right. The painting depicts a black man painting a black woman and her baby. The people are in a room, one that seems to be well kept, but one that nevertheless belongs to people of limited wealth. This painting is done in a realistic way, which is in contrast to the abstract style of Johnson. The realistic style illuminates the absence of a shade over the light bulb and that there is a trash can in plain sight, as if the room is very small and there is no separate compartment for trash in the apartment. This relates to *Home to Harlem* and Toomer in that both works exhibit the real, which is to say they are truthful depictions of everyday life in Harlem.

In his article “The Harlem Literary Renaissance,” Frances Keller states that with “*Home to Harlem*, the only book of the Harlem Renaissance to reach the *The New York Herald Tribune* best-seller list, McKay was accused of presenting the Negro as a loose-living, drifting vagrant, a flagrantly unrepresentative type” (Keller 33). This starkly contrasts with what Du Bois advocated, which was the re-education of the population to drive home the idea that blacks were *not* “idlers,” but achievers. Without a doubt, Du Bois had different views on many things. Jeffery Ogbar, in his *The Harlem Renaissance Revisited: Politics, Arts, and Letters*, writes that Du Bois

“remained optimistic that the mass of white Americans would be convinced that democracy, freedom, and civil rights were good for all, not just for whites” (Ogbar 3). Opposite the spectrum was Marcus Garvey, who thought that Black Nationalism was the answer. These two viewpoints are the relative extremes of the black intellectual camps (if you can call Garvey an intellectual, for he was more of a radical than anything else), underscoring the fact that there were differing opinions within the writing and intellectual black communities.

When talking about intellectual camps, one must look at Langston Hughes since he is both a camp of his own and perhaps the most well-known of the Harlem Renaissance writers. He is also the writer who created a bridge between the Harlem Renaissance and the greater American landscape through poetry: a connection that is also complex. In his article entitled “Africa/America: Fragmentation and Diaspora in the Work of Langston Hughes,” Jeffery Westover emphasizes the complexity of Langston Hughes and his works. He notes that while Hughes seemed to advocate the American way and draw from the past (in a positive way), he was also very critical of America. Westover cites and analyzes some of Hughes’ poems in this article to illustrate his claim about Hughes. Westover cites Hughes’ “Afro-American Fragment” as a poem that highlights how “Hughes portrays the predicament of the modern African American as he sees it” (Westover 1209). The first half of the poem is reproduced below:

So long,	Save those that songs	So far away
So far away	Beat back into the blood-	Is Africa. (Westover 1209)
Is Africa.	Beat out of blood with words sad-sung	
Not even memories alive	In strange un-Negro tongue-	
Save those that history books	So long,	

As in *Cane*, this poem laments the loss of African heritage, but the difference is that “Afro-American Fragment” purports *contradictory* views of race and memory. Whereas in *Cane* Toomer acknowledges that the past is dead or dying, Hughes despondently longs for the past in this poem. Westover expands on this nicely, noting that Hughes “evokes portentous ambiguities made out of simple language that may be interpreted as a uniquely black embodiment of American modernism. The poem [also] enunciates contradictory views of race and memory at the same time that it mourns an inconsolable loss” (1209). These contradictory views on race are another reason why Hughes is different from Toomer and McKay.

This claim further ties into what Westover discusses in terms of an African-American double consciousness; hence the title of the article containing a backslash between Africa and America. It was almost as if Hughes had an allegiance to white America, but at the same time a separate allegiance to blacks and Africa. By contrast, Hughes and McKay knew that it would be foolish not to work with whites, but were by no means trying to appease them. They wrote on what they felt was important to not only themselves but their race. The above is not meant to be a definitive assertion that Hughes was going against the flow of the Harlem Renaissance, but rather that like the movement itself, his views were multifaceted. Many of Hughes' poems are steeped in references to Harlem and African-Americans in general. In "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes writes: "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly, too...we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves" (Hughes 95). As mentioned above, Toomer says something very similar, so Hughes was not completely different from him.

**"We younger  
Negro artists who  
create now intend  
to express our  
individual dark-  
skinned selves  
without fear or  
shame. If white  
people are pleased  
we are glad. If they  
are not, it doesn't  
matter. We know  
we are beautiful.  
And ugly, too...we  
stand on top of the  
mountain, free  
within ourselves"  
- Langston Hughes**



**Langston  
Hughes**

“Without the Harlem Renaissance the battle for equality may have been even harder and we would certainly not have the important works by black authors and artists that we have today.”

In summation, the literary and artistic movements of the Harlem Renaissance were sweeping. Ogbar sums it up well, noting that “the Harlem Renaissance developed a standard for bold and audacious styles of art that have remained salient in the style of African-American political and artistic expression” (Ogbar 246). Indeed, the movement helped promote black writing, propelling it toward respectability and acceptance—not as a subsidiary of white authorship, but as an equal. The differences among the various black writers and intellectuals of the time may have hindered the movement, yet they were unavoidable in an America where Jim Crow laws subjugated and stereotyped blacks in dangerous ways. Unfortunately, these laws and others like them persisted well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, forcing blacks to fight an uphill battle for decades after the end of the Harlem Renaissance during the late 1930s. Without the Harlem Renaissance the battle for equality may have been even harder and we would certainly not have the important works by black authors and artists that we have today.



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# Jazz

BY: NEIMA ABDULAH



## {Jazz Music during the Harlem Renaissance}

During the Harlem Renaissance, the progressive yet risky music genre jazz allowed many achievements of racial integration due to the magnitude of its popularity and acceptance among so many different cultural backgrounds. The images of the performances at the nightclubs in Harlem are evidence of the diverse audience jazz attracted.

Jazz was a result of the Harlem Renaissance and how far this time period has come. The Harlem Renaissance blossomed between the times of World War I and the Great Depression. While millions of American troops were overseas, vacant jobs became available to the public. Jobs were plentiful in cities, especially in the North. Because of this, about six

million African-Americans migrated to the North. The location remembered for their strong presence was Harlem. This

It was able to foster a new black cultural identity.

is how the The Harlem Renaissance came about –between the years of 1917 and the 1930s. The Harlem Renaissance

Originated in: New Orleans

est. 1910

*Jazz features improvisation over traditional structure, performer over composer, and black American experience over conventional white sensibilities.*



increased the cultural presence of African-Americans. It was able to foster a new black cultural identity. Writer Alain Locke called the Harlem Renaissance a "spiritual coming of age" provided the African-American community an opportunity for "first chances for group expression and self-determination" (Locke). This was one of the first times in American history that the African-American culture was celebrated and respected. The time period this took place had a lot to do with what African-Americans accomplished as a unit

### **The Roaring Twenties**

"The Roaring Twenties," also known as the Jazz Age, was a unique decade defined by fashion, music, politics and many other aspects of that time period. This time period capitalized on the sociability and artistic ability of African-Americans. The Roaring

Twenties had an economic growth impact and this seemed to be a time when job opportunities flourished. African-Americans took advantage of the job opportunities that became available. The dynamic features of the roaring twenties were present in metropolitan cities. The roaring twenties complimented the Harlem Renaissance because both periods of time influenced the cultural urbanization of the metropolitan areas it happened in. African-Americans had an opportunity to participate in these advantageous time periods. But this period is best remembered for the urban music scene. The music that came during the Harlem Renaissance and the Roaring Twenties, specifically Jazz, revolutionized how African-Americans were viewed in society.

**The roaring  
twenties  
complimented  
the Harlem  
Renaissance  
because both  
periods of  
time  
influenced the  
cultural  
urbanization of  
the  
metropolitan  
areas it**

Jazz  
was just  
starting to  
develop at  
the same  
pace of the  
Harlem



## Music Migration: Movin' On Up To The North!

Jazz music, blues and ragtime, which had a visibility in the North, all started and developed from the Deep South. Due to the migration of millions of southern African-Americans to the North, their cultures and traditions came along with them. Blues and spirituals were music genres that African-Americans called their own. This kind of music had ties with the African-American culture and was a form of expression for their trials and agony due to the inequality that was visible in America. Blues originated from African spirituals and Gospel music in the South in the late 1800s. Artists used finger-picked acoustic guitars and harmonicas and sung lyrics from Gospel music blended with their own personal struggles. Their music allowed for them to lift each other's spirit and relate to each other's experience. Blues found its way to Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance from the Great Migration. The African-American struggle against discrimination and inequality in the United States fueled Blues musicians to use music as a venting system. While blues was at the peak of its presence, Jazz was just starting to develop at the same pace of the Harlem Renaissance.

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## Jazz in New York

Jazz formed in the early twentieth century in the South, specifically in New Orleans, from African-American music blended with different aspects of European influence. Jazz developed out of blues and ragtime music, both forms were used to capture the African-American experience in America. This was music from the souls of black men and women. It was a music genre that was free yet highly expressive of the African-American culture. What makes jazz unique as a genre is that it “features improvisation over traditional structure, performer over composer, and black American experience over conventional white sensibilities” (Lindsay). Hundreds of Jazz musicians flourished into the New York scene, and they perfected the art of improvising and didn't follow a musical production pattern. Since it came to existence around 1910, Jazz music developed with the artists that were around at the time. Since it was a new genre, it was up to the musicians to give it an identity.



## Jazz Legends

Some of the well-respected jazz musicians are the following performers. Louis Armstrong was born in New Orleans but moved to New York for music opportunities. He played the trumpet. Cab Calloway was a musician that's credited for giving Ella Fitzgerald her first big break. His most well-known composition is titled "Minnie the Moocher."

out was the orchestra that performed with him. Dizzy Gillespie was a trumpet player. Dizzy was versatile in that he appeared on many different broadcast mediums such as motion pictures, television, radio, and record albums. James Fletcher Henderson moved to New York at first to obtain a college education. He ended up working for Black Swan Records, the first African-American owned record label.



Miles Davis was a very well-loved trumpet performer. "Davis is a veteran performer of many years noted for walking around stage or performing with his back to the audience." Duke Ellington was born in Washington D.C. he moved to New York to pursue music. The most well-loved musician of the Harlem Renaissance era. He headlined many shows at the Cotton Club, Lenox Lounge, Smalls Paradise, Connie's Inn, Savoy Ballroom and Apollo Theatre. He played the piano but what helped him stand



His music is remembered as being pure and occurring at a time when Jazz was at its finest. Charles Parker was a saxophonist from Kansas City. He performed alongside greats such as Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Max Roach, and other (Hilliard). One thing is certain about the artists of the Harlem Renaissance. They were competitive and perfectionists. There was no room for untalented and unskilled artists. It became a huge business there for, only the best would get booked and became highly requested.



## Phenomenon

Now that New York was experiencing the Roaring Twenties, Harlem Renaissance and newly birthed music genres, this metropolitan city began to gain a national notoriety for its cultivation of creativity and sound. 52<sup>nd</sup> Street became a phenomenon and the nightclubs provided a platform for the musicians to be viewed. It was a location that was thriving with activities for African-Americans to engage in." An article stated that "between Fifth Avenue and Seventh Avenue on 52nd street, there was an abundance of live jazz clubs that kept a lively beat going, often, until 5:00 in the morning" (Tivis). This is evidence that New York became a mecca for black music. Listeners were fascinated by the new music phenomenon. It was liberating. People like Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis and Duke Ellington were the face of the music scene in Harlem at the time. They pioneered the emerging black music scene during the Harlem Renaissance. They graced many venues like the famous Cotton Club to perform. There was something edgy about Jazz. "The city was also the center of the music publishing business." It didn't gain all positive attention when it first peaked in New York. Jazz clubs stretched between Fifth Avenue and Seventh Avenue on 52nd street. Curabitur vulputate auctor

## Sed tellus suscipit in aliquam

Ut facilisis ante in dui ac suscipit, turpis volutatum donec, fusce suspendisse, quasi



JAZZ	JAZZ	JAZZ	JAZZ
<b>risky business</b> ----- <b>devil's music</b>	<b>Jazz music brought forth a lot of controversy when the genre was first introduced in the early twentieth century people that it would have a negative influence on young adults and children.</b>		

## Devil's Music

Not everyone was a supporter of Jazz music. In a short amount of time, the genre grew to become a national phenomenon, pushed out to the American audience through the radio and word of mouth. There was plenty of resistance against its popularity. Many people criticized the music and called it the devil's music. Many people called it the devil's music because of the genre's association with the African-American culture. Jazz music brought forth a lot of controversy when the genre was first introduced in the early twentieth century because people thought it would have a negative influence on young adults and children. There was something liberating about the music. As it continued to grow in popularity so did the public's acceptance of it. The once dubbed devil's music became a respectable art form. Musician and composer Duke Ellington coined Jazz as "American Music" because he believed that it was a fabric that contained a rich history of the African-American culture. The audience of the jazz music came from many different backgrounds.

## Prohibition

The alcohol prohibition times of the 1920s brought Jazz and alcohol together into illegally run venues. Speakeasies, venue establishments that sold illegal alcohol, booked Jazz musicians to provide entertainment during night time at locations that were hidden.





Since the prohibition of alcohol was enforced, these illegal practicing locations had to remain hidden from the general public and from anyone that could threaten its functioning abilities. These were places where they could freely practice their talents without any opposition from society. Although the artists were often booked at white-only venues, the speakeasies provided a reconnection with their culture. Whites attended these events out of curiosity and to mingle with African-Americans. The diverse crowd who attended the secretive hidden events laughed and danced the night away long hours into the night. A new dance craze developed out of the Jazz music nightclub scene – the Charleston. “Named after the South Carolina city, The Charleston was created by James P. Johnson for the Broadway show *Runnin' Wild*. Just like the music to accompany it, the dance fad was also considered immoral and provocative” (Andreu). Speakeasies built a bridge between economical social groups and people from different racial backgrounds. The music became a platform for discussion. Those who didn’t approve

of jazz certainly did not approve of the racial integration it provided. Interracial couples considered speakeasies opportunities to spend time together without one of them being told they can’t come in the location. The fact that African-American jazz musicians performed at speakeasies was risky and helped build the case of why critics referred it as the devil’s music. Young whites who attended the speakeasies began to gain a relaxed and supportive outlook on racial issues.



Although Jazz had difficulty bringing blacks and whites together, it also had trouble bringing different economical levels of black people together. Some African-Americans were not fond of the genre because they felt that the music didn't represent them. The jazz musicians made the songs for Americans who weren't respected or recognized as equals –the poor and blacks. Therefore, well-off African-Americans thought themselves too good for the music. "Middle-class and upper-class black families were, at best, ambivalent about embracing vernacular elements of African American culture-and often explicitly hostile" (Boland). Blacks who were well-off attempted to assimilate into the white culture and considered themselves disassociated from the poor blacks who adored and advocated for the genre. Often referred to as the black social elites, upper-class blacks had to assimilate into the white culture of the large American northeastern cities where jazz was gaining popularity. The usage of the Harlem Piano, which developed during the Harlem Renaissance, helped Jazz music gain respect because the instrument was considered one of class and high quality. Not only was the music gaining popularity, it reinforced pride for African-Americans it gave whites a chance to examine the thriving culture in which they

became fascinated by. Like Ellington said, the devil's music was actually American music all along. It would only be a matter of time until it would become the general consensus that jazz was the people's music.





**The best explanation of what jazz provided for people is that “it became both an expression of alienation and of attempts to overcome it.” It broke barriers and gave people an opportunity to affiliate with one another.**

Since Jazz rose out of the new black working class with money to spend, their experience became similar to whites that had money to allocate towards things outside of their essential needs. The life they lived on the countryside turned into life in thriving inner-cities that embraced their musical abilities. Jazz was viewed as the “people’s” music because it brought people together. The genre grew nationally and

internationally. It was even estimated that before the Harlem Renaissance ended, there were 60,000 jazz bands that existed. The radio and recorded songs “were bringing Jazz to locations so remote that no band could reach them” (PBS). Jazz successfully transcended boundaries by being an advocate for self-expression. The ability to get on the stage and captivate any audience that’s watching you, regardless of their

race, is a powerful experience the musicians looked forward to. People viewed it as a way to escape everyday life. The best explanation of what jazz provided for people is that “it became both an expression of alienation and of attempts to overcome it” (Hore). It broke barriers and gave people an opportunity to affiliate with one another.





Black music helped gain a public respect for the black culture and transcended boundaries of racial stereotypes. The musicians made songs for Americans who weren't respected or recognized as equals –the poor and blacks. The black musicians, composers and songwriters were adored nationally and internationally by people from many different backgrounds. Music was able to shatter some levels of racial issues.



Through jazz, African-Americans were able to be frontier participants in a thriving society that they orchestrated themselves. As quick as Jazz music has come, it also left. It came at a good time, during the Roaring Twenties when the economy was booming. On the flip side, it left at a time when the country was experiencing an economic disadvantage –during the Great Depression, which started in about 1929. Although the period of Harlem Renaissance ended, what it left behind are everlasting representations from

that era that are visible to this day. Through jazz music, America became liberated. The music that was shared during that time period has proven to be timeless and continues to live on through this day in age.

Jazz music promoted an association of all races and set the tone for the racial integration that would come decades later in America.

The musicians, during the Harlem Renaissance, were judged based on their musical abilities and not by their race. It was clear that whites were examining African-Americans in a positive light. It would be safe to say that Jazz music was not only American music but also Civil Rights music. The musicians became ambassadors for civil rights, using their fame to help aid their race towards progressive boundaries. Because they were able to perform all over the world, their

interactions allowed for them to shatter any stereotypes that people might have had about African-Americans.

An example of this situation is when Charles Black, a lawyer during the Brown v. Board of Education stated that although he grew up as a racist, all his hatred disappeared the first time he heard Louis Armstrong's music. Black stated, "He was the first genius I had ever seen. We never saw a black then in any but a servant's capacity" (Broderick). His realization led him to appreciate the creativity and talent of African-Americans not only as musicians, but as human beings.

Although jazz music is no longer the most popular genre, the concept of racial understanding it promoted helped shape the America we live in today. The late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called jazz music "America's triumphant music." There is not a music genre that exists today that has made the same impact as Jazz.

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