

UC Merced

The Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced

Title

The Great Migration and the Demographics of America

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8b70v842>

Journal

The Undergraduate Historical Journal at UC Merced, 2(2)

Author

McKnight, Christy

Publication Date

2015

DOI

10.5070/H322027645

Copyright Information

Copyright 2015 by the author(s). This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Peer reviewed

The Great Migration and the Demographics of America

By Christy McKnight

Most historical narratives of the Great Migration stop short of explaining why this phenomenon abruptly reversed course during the Johnson administration, and has continued to do so since. Using the theoretical lens of historians and philosophers specializing in urban, labor, and social movements, I will argue that a modern transformation in African American identity has been conditioned as much by external forces, such as political, labor, and housing practices, as it has by internal forces, such as the desire for true agency and self-determination, and that this transformation has resulted in the mass rejection of urban lifestyles that held more appeal in the past. The demographic landscape of America has again changed significantly, and hopes for racial integration and advancement in large cities have been stymied by the departure of significant numbers of middle and upper class African Americans. In order to analyze these events, it is necessary to interpret numerous and varied sources. This requires inclusion of newspaper accounts, demographic interpretations, census results, dissimilarity indexes, rhetorical explanations, and secondary sources which have established that conditions in large cities have been subpar for plebian society since their origins, and that minorities have been especially subject to demoralizing surroundings instituted by daily practices in the United States.