

Corrupt: 1920-1940

I. A city of contrasts

1. **Stephen Nepa:** Liquor was everywhere during Prohibition in Philadelphia; Philadelphians loved to get around this _____ any way they could.

2. *Afraid of their city veering out of control, outraged citizens appeal to the _____ government for help.*

3. **Kate Oxx:** All of the people who studied the Parkway as the site for The World's Fair agreed with Wanamaker that this was the _____, that's where it should happen.

4. **James Tayoun:** The Vare brothers made money. They spread some of that money out and got what they wanted. Their _____ came from giving _____ to people and giving _____ to elected officials and feeding the populace.

5. *The Vare brothers use their power to take over the Republican party _____, the Organization, once dominated by _____.*

6. What did the Organization provide to people?

7. This system allows the Vares to run anyone they want for _____ and they choose an old friend, Freeland Kendrick, who _____ easily.

II. The Great Migration

1. **J McCarthy:** You have tens of thousands of _____ black immigrants coming and settling in the city and they're bringing cultured, cultivated African American _____ and sort of lowdown gutbucket _____, and early forms of _____ and ragtime.

2. *Newly arrived in the big city, Lucy Spease seeks employment in the homes of white families, but she and her children must make their _____ in a decrepit boarding _____.*

3. **T. Gill:** What African Americans in Philadelphia did was take the disadvantages of their lack of access to other _____ of the city and instead create a _____ community in and around South Street.

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III. The Vare Machine

1. **C. Hardy:** You have gambling and prostitution and bootlegging and speakeasies that are running wide _____, which kicks back to the magistrate, which kicks back to the _____ committee.
2. **Stephen Nepa:** (Police Commander) Butler initiated something called the “_____ policy” where he would send out teams to start _____ several of the speakeasies and distilleries at once.
3. **T. Keels:** (Mayor) Kendrick feels he has no choice but to _____ Butler.
4. T Keels: Kendrick moves the World’s Fair from the Parkway down to this mass of _____ and ash heaps in _____ Philadelphia.
5. The Sesquicentennial is a failure because:

IV. The Great Depression & New Deal in Philadelphia

1. *The 1929 stock market crash causes already weakened Philadelphia _____ to fail, and bank failures lead to the _____ closing of factories.*
2. The collapse (of Lucy Spease’s home) transfixes the city.....Immediately, it becomes a _____ of the incompetence of the Organization. Philadelphia’s working people start to band together along _____ lines.
3. List accomplishments of New Deal programs in Philadelphia:

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The Standard of Living Among One Hundred Negro Migrant Families
in Philadelphia by Sadie Tanner Mossell, PhD
<https://archive.org/details/stadardofliving00moss> (or see below)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Negro Migration of 1916, 1917, 1918.
A Detailed Statement of the Migration to Philadelphia During This
Period

Getting the Facts

1. How did World War I (the Great War) change the labor market in the North?
2. What generalizations can be made about the type of work done by the migrants?
3. How did Philadelphia's existing black community help the migrants?
4. How did white Philadelphians react to the influx of black Southern migrants?

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5. How did the influx of the migrants impact the lives of “old Philadelphians,” members of Philadelphia’s long-standing black community?
6. According to Alexander, why were the migrants in part to blame for the negative views that whites and “old Philadelphians” had of them?

Analysis:

1. What is the significance of the race riot that occurred when a “colored probation officer...a woman of refinement and training and a citizen of old Philadelphia” purchased a house on previously all-white block?
2. Sadie Tanner Mossell was a member of the elite and well-established “old Philadelphia” black community, yet she chose to write her dissertation about the lives of the migrants. Based on what you’ve read in the Introduction, how do you think she feels about the steep increase in Philadelphia’s black population?

The Standard of Living Among One Hundred Negro Migrant Families in Philadelphia

By SADIE TANNER MOSSELL, Ph.D.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Negro Migration of 1916, 1917, 1918.
A Detailed Statement of the Migration to Philadelphia During This Period.

IT is estimated that four hundred thousand Negroes suddenly moved North during the years 1916, 1917, 1918.¹ The movement embraced Negroes of all classes² and from every state south of Delaware, east of, but including Texas.³ The causes for their coming were two-fold: on the one hand, certain conditions in the South impelled them to leave; on the other, fortuitous circumstances made it desirable to invite them to come north.⁴

The most important of the impelling circumstances we have classified as follows:

Economic { low wages
failure of crops due to the boll-weevil, resulting in unemployment
dissatisfaction with the tenant and crop sharing system.

¹ Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 1920, p. 5.

² Negro Migration in 1916-1917, U. S. Department of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, 1919, p. 11.

³ Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration*, Washington, 1918.

⁴ W. O. Scroggs, *Interstate Migration of The Negro Population, Journal of Political Economy*, 1917, p. 1034; How the War Brings Unprecedented Opportunities to the Negro Race, *Current Opinion*, Dec., 1916, p. 404-405; Lure of the North for Negroes, *Survey*, April 7, June 2, 1917; *The Crisis*, Oct., 1916, p. 270. June, 1917, p. 63.

Social { poor schools
segregation
monotonous farm life
lynching
Political { disfranchisement
mistreatment and persecution by representatives of the law.

Generally dissatisfied, therefore, with the régime of the South, the Negro was ready to abandon it for the first opening elsewhere. Foreign immigrants had always been influential in keeping him out of the northern labor market. But the Great War cut off European labor at a time when war orders were most pressing and labor most needed. The industries of the North were forced to turn to the Negro as their only immediately available supply of labor. As an inducement to come north, they offered him the antithesis of many of the conditions which made the Negro desirous of leaving the South, viz.:

High wages
Little or no unemployment
Educational facilities, the best in the land
The lure of the city
The ballot
Greater justice in the courts.

Of the four hundred thousand Negroes who took advantage of the oppor-

PREFACE

THE exodus of the Negro from the southern to the northern states during 1916, 1917, and 1918 called forth numerous dissertations on the causes and effects of the movement. Some of these dealt with the entire migration, while others limited themselves to a particular aspect of the influx to a given territory. The latter method has been adopted in the following discussion, which is an attempt to arrive at conclusions concerning the migrants to Philadelphia, through an intensive analysis of the budgets of a small number of their group. The statements leading to these conclusions would perhaps be more forceful if supported by charts and diagrams. But, for publication purposes it was found necessary that these be omitted.

For whatever value the study has, the author is particularly indebted to Dr. Raymond T. Bye of the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, who gave untiring and sympathetic guidance, and to her mother, who checked the statistical work, read the manuscript and rendered in other ways inestimable aid.

SADIE TANNER MOSSELL.

tunity to move north, at least forty thousand⁵ came to Philadelphia. Since the present investigation deals entirely with the migrant who came to that city it seems advisable that as a background for the study we should inquire more in detail into the exodus to Philadelphia.

The migration to Philadelphia began in the spring of 1916⁶ and was maintained at a normal rate of 150 per week from that time on to the spring of 1918 when the city was confronted with the largest influx of Negroes in its history. Eight to ten thousand arrived during the months of April, May and June alone. After this time, however, the migration dropped back to its normal rate.⁷ But with the signing of the Armistice in November of 1918, war orders and the accompanying need for an increased labor supply ended. The demand for a further exodus of Negroes no longer existing, migration to Philadelphia, in the proportions previously described, ceased.

In an exodus based so largely on economic and social motives one is not surprised to find that many migrants sought of their own accord to settle in Philadelphia, an industrial center, a city of "brotherly love," reputed to have a favorable attitude

⁵ The approximation that 40,000 Negroes came to Philadelphia during the period of migration above described is derived from an estimate made by the Division of Negro Economics and based on the number of Negroes employed in Philadelphia in 1917 in excess of the number employed in 1915, which number is given as 33,500.⁸ To this we added the conservative estimate of 10,000 for 1918. The sum of these two numbers assures us of a minimum influx of 40,000. The reader is cautioned against considering that Philadelphia's colored population was permanently increased to this extent; since with the closing down of war industries there was a readjustment of population.

⁶ Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 55.

⁷ Philadelphia Public Ledger, July 28, 1918.

⁸ Negro Migration in 1916-1917, Appendix.

toward colored people. We find, nevertheless, that regardless of the attractions of the city *per se*, there were definite influences at work to induce Negroes to come to Philadelphia. The chief of these were the railroads of Pennsylvania and the industries of Philadelphia.

The Pennsylvania and Erie Railroads found it impossible to keep their systems in repair because of a shortage of labor. They, therefore, sent labor agents into the South to persuade Negroes to supply this demand. Early in the summer of 1916 the agents of these railroads picked up trainloads of Negroes promiscuously from Jacksonville, St. Augustine and Pensacola, Florida. They brought twelve thousand of them into Pennsylvania, one thousand of whom were sent to Philadelphia.⁹

The industrial plants situated in and adjacent to Philadelphia were also influential in attracting Negroes to the city. As early as August, 1916, The National Hosiery and Underwear Manufacturers of Philadelphia proposed bringing colored girls from the South to work in knitting mills. In preparation for this work, girls were at that time being trained at Endfield, North Carolina, to take permanent positions in the northern mills.¹⁰

Similar propositions were made by other manufacturers. The sending of labor agents into the South was, however, for the most part rendered unnecessary for the manufacturers of Philadelphia, because the majority of the migrants who had their transportation paid by the railroads left their employ on finding wages higher in other industries.¹¹ The extent of the

⁹ Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, pp. 55, 135.

¹⁰ Philadelphia North American, August 2, 1918.

¹¹ Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 135.

demand for Negro labor by the industries of Philadelphia may, however, be judged from the following press comment:

Four hours after the Federal Labor Exchange had opened yesterday it was apparent that if requisitions for Negro labor filed by various manufacturers in the metropolitan zone were filled, Philadelphia and this section of Pennsylvania would have a fresh race problem. For in the 850 requisitions were demands for 257,164 men for August, September, and October in war industries in this state, and of that number were requisitions for 186,000 Negroes alone, to be used in unskilled labor.¹²

The demand for Negro labor having come entirely from the industries and for unskilled labor, we are not surprised to find the migrants almost wholly employed as unskilled laborers in the industrial plants of Philadelphia. In the column opposite is a statement of the plants in which they worked largely in this capacity and the number employed, during the year 1917.

The sudden increase, in such large proportions, in the Philadelphia Negro population, which, as we have just seen, was the result of unusual opportunities for work offered by the city and of the purposeful efforts of the industries to secure labor, created serious problems. The most pressing of these was the housing of the new comers. The Pennsylvania Railroad was the only industry which provided any kind of housing for the migrant. The camps in which it lodged him, however, proved to be of little assistance, since the camps themselves, consisting of ordinary tents and box cars, did not provide adequate shelter and since many of the men left the employ of the railroad, while others abandoned the camps as soon as they were able to bring their families north.¹³

¹² Philadelphia Public Ledger, August 2, 1918.

¹³ Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 135.

NEGRO LABORERS EMPLOYED IN INDUSTRIAL PLANTS OF PHILADELPHIA IN 1917

Pennsylvania Railroad Camps	170
Girard.....	300
Mantau Junction.....	60
Frankford Junction.....	150
Eastern Pennsylvania Camp.....	120
Baltimore and Ohio Camps.....	300
Reading Camps.....	1,100
Total for Railroad Camps.....	4,000
Midvale Steel Co.....	1,000
Atlantic Refining Co.....	700
Franklin Sugar Co.....	1,100
Keystone Paving and Construction Co. (Chester)	600
Westinghouse-Church-Kerr.....	600
Eddystone Munition Corporation.....	400
Disston Saw Co.....	8,400
Total Estimated Number in Plants Visited.....	7,750
Estimated Number of Women and Children.....	16,250
Total Estimate for Philadelphia.....	33,500

Housing conditions in the city were deplorable. Press comments describe the Negroes as herded together like cattle and tell us of one room measuring 16 by 20 feet in which twenty men slept on the floor, as no beds were provided, and for which the proprietor charged \$1.50 a week.¹⁴ It was found necessary, therefore, immediately to ameliorate the housing condition and its accompanying social problems.

To that end, interested organizations and individuals in the city formed committees to assist in the work. The Philadelphia Housing Association sent out inspectors to inquire into the na-

¹⁴ Philadelphia Public Ledger, Jan. 26, 1917; Jan. 31, 1918.

ture of the housing situation and to find possibilities for improving it. They were also active in forming committees on Negro migration among other organizations. Through their efforts the Civic Club of Philadelphia joined in the work being carried on in the interest of Negro migration by the Central Committee of the Department of Health and Charities.¹⁵

A committee was appointed by Bishop Rhinelander, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to take action in the promotion of better housing conditions for the Negro migrant. The committee consisted of social workers, church officials, and representatives of such industries as the Franklin Sugar Refining Company and the Pennsylvania Railroad.¹⁶ Representatives of the Armstrong Association, the Travelers' Aid, the Society for Organizing Charity, the Philadelphia Housing Association and various Negro churches formed a joint committee to provide suitable housing for Negro families arriving in the city and to aid them in securing work.¹⁷

The Philadelphia Academy of Medicine, composed of Negro physicians, dentists and druggists, put into effect measures calculated to meet requirements for housing, sanitation, medical attention and education. Eighty colored physicians of the city collected information which took the form of a weekly report to the Bureau of Health. Real estate dealers were asked to submit lists of houses immediately available and to provide hundreds of new ones, cheaply but substantially built. Stereopticon lectures and talks were given on a large scale in all the Negro churches, telling the new arrivals how to care for themselves in Philadelphia,

¹⁵ *Public Ledger*, Jan. 26, 1917; Jan. 31, 1918; *Evening Bulletin*, March 26, 1917.

¹⁶ *Evening Bulletin*, Dec. 24, 1920.

¹⁷ *Public Ledger*, July 28, 1918.

how to avoid colds, and giving them other useful information.¹⁸

The Interdenominational Ministerial Union embracing all Negro ministers of the city mapped out a detailed plan to assist the migrants. They tried not only to enroll them in the churches but to give them aid through the church. One of the most active churches in carrying out the program was Calvary M. E. Church, Broad and Bainbridge Streets, which enrolled 4,200 children in its Sunday School, gave out 50 buckets of soup daily during the winter of 1918, and coal to all who needed it. This same church formed a Committee of One Hundred to deal with the idle and indolent among the migrants.¹⁹ Many other churches while not administering physical comforts, nevertheless played their part by giving sound advice to the migrant. They urged him to send his children to school, to take advantage of the libraries and night schools, himself, to give the best service to his employer regardless of pay, and above all to remember that in him the race was on trial; for now he was given a chance to work at a living wage, to buy a home, save money and become an active part of Philadelphia's citizenry. The entire country was watching to see what advantage he would take of this opportunity.²⁰

It is difficult to measure just what each of the committees and associations which we have mentioned did accomplish, but for our purpose it is sufficient to point out that most of the social organizations of the city tried to aid the Negro migrant to become adjusted to his new environment. Their voluntary and cheerful efforts must

¹⁸ Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 137.

¹⁹ *Evening Bulletin*, July 30, 1917; *Public Ledger*, Jan. 31, 1918.

²⁰ Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 138.

not, however, be taken as an indication of the manner in which the Philadelphia public, white and colored, received the migrant. If we may judge the attitude of the whites by their efforts to segregate him, it would seem that he was highly unwelcome. The housing problem was itself a result of the determination on the part of the white people that the migrant should live only in that part of the city in which Negroes had previously lived. Vacant houses in other sections were not for rent or for sale to Negroes.²¹ The increase in Negro population greatly stimulated the movement, already on foot, to segregate Negro children in the schools. Also such social privileges as the service of eating houses and the attending of white churches and theatres by Negroes, were practically withdrawn after the influx of Negro migrants into Philadelphia.²²

Actual conflicts between the two races were not numerous; only one of any importance occurred during the period of the migration, and this was a result of the impending housing problem. A colored probation officer of the Municipal Court, a woman of refinement and training and an old citizen of Philadelphia, purchased and took up her residence at the house numbered 2936 Ellsworth Street. The white people in the neighborhood resented her living there and besieged the house. A race riot ensued in which two men were killed and sixty injured.²³

This incident explains the attitude of the Negro public of Philadelphia toward the coming of the migrant. As in the case of the probation officer

so in numerous other occurrences, the colored people of every class received harsh treatment at the hands of the

²¹ *Public Ledger*, July 28, 1918. Jan. 26, 1918; Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 135.

²² Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, p. 135.

²³ *Public Ledger*, July 29, 1918.

white public. This was virtually unknown to the Philadelphia Negro, for the city had long possessed a relatively small population of Negroes of culture, education and some financial means. They had always enjoyed the same social and educational facilities as the whites and courteous treatment from them. But, with the increase in population by a group of generally uneducated and untrained persons, these privileges were withdrawn as has already been discussed. The old colored citizens of Philadelphia resented this, placed the blame at the migrant's door and stood aloof from him. Negro preachers invited the new arrivals into the church but many of the congregations made him know that he was not wanted. In some cases the church split over the matter, the migrants and their sympathizers withdrawing and forming a church for themselves.

The Negro migrants were not absolutely blameless in the attitude assumed toward them by the white and colored public. While crime and immorality among them never developed beyond control, many of their number were to be seen lounging on corners, frequenting dens of vice and saloons and arming themselves with razors and pistols, thereby increasing the number of court cases and greatly marring the records of the Negroes in Philadelphia and the peace of the city.²⁴ Although the numbers indulging in these practices may have composed only a small percentage of the total migrants, in such cases the action of the few condemned all.

This situation brings clearly before us the principal inquiries which the migration as a whole has raised in the minds of all who have studied it. Even from our brief discussion of the migration to Philadelphia the same questions occur to us: Was the mi-

²⁴ *Evening Bulletin*, July 30, 1917.

grant to Philadelphia able to adapt himself to the environment of an industrial economy, and did his presence help or hinder the racial condition in that city? Believing that the standard of living maintained by a people is an index of the extent to which they have

adapted themselves to a given environment, we have undertaken to analyze the incomes and expenditures of a group of migrant families in order to ascertain the character of their standards of living and thereby to judge of the degree of adaptation obtained by them.

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