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DANGERS SEEN AND UNSEEN
Black Women's Mobility, Community, and
Work During the Migration Era, 1915-1940

By

LaTrese Evette Adkins

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ABSTRACT

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Whether staying at home, traveling on a journey, or settling in a specific location, certain dangers confronted Black female laborers. These seen and unseen dangers connect individual women's lives and the mechanics of their migration process. Great Migration historiography, however, does not adequately illuminate the gender specific mechanics of this process. Hence, the researcher developed a *conceptual framework* that incorporates Black women's safety, community, and employment issues. Using this new, gender sensitive paradigm, personal and institutional efforts to assist Black women's transitions from southern to northern lifestyles, i.e., the mechanics of their migration process, become visible.

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“Now finish the work, . . .”

II Corinthians 8:11

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INTRODUCTION

Charlotte came to Cleveland from Mississippi in the mid- to late 1920s. Led to the door of the Phillis Wheatley Association by a minister whose acquaintance she had made on the train, Charlotte indeed must have looked like one of the “southern leaves blown North by the winds of destitution.” The perception of “beings who are acted upon” stigmatizes the histories of those migrants who left no records behind. Lawrence Levine, a historian of Black culture, challenges readers of Black migration narratives to view migrants as “actors capable of affecting at least some part of their destinies.” Therefore, Charlotte’s historical experience in the Great Migration must be filtered from “that large shapeless majority that we tend to refer to as ‘the masses.’”¹

Recording her as one of the many “defenseless souls from the deep South,” Jane Edna Hunter, founder and director of Cleveland’s Phillis Wheatley Association, chronicled the events in Charlotte’s life as well as other Black women’s experiences in her autobiography *A Nickel and a Prayer*.² Hunter’s recapitulation of Charlotte’s northern excursion relayed in a few short paragraphs a particular struggle of Black women during the Great Migration period—mobility as an expression of freedom and the safety issues that underlay the migration process. However, the thousands of Charlottes or southern Black female migrants remain invisible to labor agents, trade unionists, and other male centered

¹ Throughout this paper, *Charlotte* will represent the many southern Black female migrants who are personified by the actual Charlotte who is described, i.e., an historical pseudonym. The phrase “Hunter’s Charlotte” refers to the original subject.

aspects of the migration narrative. An historical understanding of Black women's participation in the population shift that occurred between the two World Wars analyzes the relationship of individual women's lives and the mechanics of the migration process. Concomitantly, the scholarship of labor and urban history would benefit from such serious examinations as the differences and similarities among Black women migrants. Whether rural, urban, domestic servant, industrial laborer, married, single, working class, middle class or professional, the dynamics of Black women's migration rescue their economic and cultural significance from historical obscurity.

The thesis' organizational structure documents Black women's mobility during the migration period. The first chapter presents an historical overview of Black migration. This chapter also reviews the historiography of the Great Migration within the context of urban history. Finally, this chapter adds an alternative methodology for uncovering Black women's migration experiences despite the "forces larger than themselves."³ This section concludes with the "sketchy" individual experience of Hunter's Charlotte of Cleveland, Ohio. The women of the "stay-at-home" communities in the South also deserve historical recognition for their participation in the migration narrative. Thus, this chapter assesses nonmigrant, Black women's roles in the Great Migration.

The second chapter employs an innovative location technique to find *Charlotte* prior to her arrival in Cleveland. An attempt to develop this collective identity or historical pseudonym via consistent exploration, interpretation, application, and appropriation of primary as well as secondary sources, this chapter traces *Charlotte's* employment history from slavery until the beginning of the migration wave (c. 1915). Two facts reverberate throughout the secondary literature. Foremost, Black women have "always worked."

Feminist scholar and pioneering women's historian Gerda Lerner succinctly states, "For most Black women work is not so much a liberating force as an imposed life long necessity."⁴ Second, scholars also agree that unsolicited, sexual threats to Black womanhood shroud their work history. For example, historian Stephanie J. Shaw asserts that such "attacks on Black female morality . . . rested on historical tradition."⁵ Therefore, resistance and survival characterize *Charlotte's* occupational journey.

Eventually, *Charlotte's* quest for freedom and protection from white domination ultimately takes her out of the South. Some northern institutions provided protection for Black women migrants. To this end, the third chapter investigates the work of Jane Edna Hunter and the Phillis Wheatley Association of Cleveland, Ohio.

The final chapter serves as a research agenda for the development of gender sensitive migration studies, i.e., more inclusive labor and urban history. Here I re-emphasize my paradigmatic shift for constructing the Great Migration narrative in light of Black women's working-class history. My conclusion rests on an observation made by the scholar with whom this introduction began. Lawrence Levine remarked in a "Comment" included in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, "Human beings are much more complex than historians often allow and so is their culture."⁶ And, I would add, so too Black women's lives of work and their experiences with migration.

Chapter One

“CAN I GET A WITNESS?”

Re-Constructing the Story of the Great Migration

Historical Context

Movement or mobility offers a consistent thematic interpretation of African American history. Historians concur that from the arrival of African people to the Western world, i.e., forced migration, and throughout their quest for freedom, movement characterizes Black history.¹ A premier Black historian, Carter G. Woodson, noted the starting date of African American migration as the second decade of the nineteenth century. Yet, as early as the late eighteenth century Captain Paul Cuffee, a free Black man, set the pattern for New World Africans who attempted organized repatriation.²

Migration as a form of resistance resurfaced in the nineteenth century. During the 1840s Martin R. Delany believed that there was no future in “white America” for the Black man. Consequently, Delany negotiated with the Egba of what would become Nigeria for the right to establish an Afro-American settlement in western Nigeria. Blacks also pushed for repatriation in the 1860s, immediately after the collapse of chattel slavery. During the 1890s, both Bishop Henry McNeil Turner of the United States and Dr. Edward Wilmont Blyden in Africa and the Caribbean pointed to the “fatherland” of Africa as the answer for her persecuted children of the New World. As a result, the west

coast of Africa became home for many expatriates with settlements in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.³

Marcus Mosiah Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (U.N.I.A.) ushered in the most notable migration attempt of the twentieth century. With his promulgation of the "race first" doctrine, tangible agencies such as the *Negro World* newspaper, Black Star Line shipping and cruise company, and a factory for the production of Black dolls, Garvey's nationalism attracted the attention of the African world.⁴ Particularly, the U.N.I.A. garnered the participation of migrant populations. In Northern cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Cleveland, Garvey enjoyed the support of transplanted southerners, Jamaicans, Trinidadian, and other Caribbean and African peoples.⁵

Notably, American culture critic Farah Jasmine Griffin maintains that there is commonality within the diversity of migration experiences. Griffin substantiates this claim by identifying "a new form of cultural production." According to Griffin, a variety of literary, musical, and visual works created by African Americans in the twentieth century comprise the "migration narrative."⁶ These artifacts, created during the height of the Great Migration and succeeding years, not only illustrate the migration experience but also reiterate the southern roots of freedom's expression or movement. Thus, linking Black migration to the post-Civil war era of the South provides a geographic context of migration historiography, an excellent point of departure for a discussion of the Great Migration, and the cultural backdrop from which most migrants departed.

For Black Americans, the post-Reconstruction era opened inauspiciously. Although the 1865 Freedmen's Bureau Act served as a Congressional acknowledgment

of the need for Black autonomy via land ownership, Southern whites abided by such legislation with about the same enthusiasm as they welcomed emancipation.⁷ Southern white opposition to Black self-reliance also expressed itself in overt ways. Responding to the tenuous gains of their former bondwomen and men, paranoid and anxious whites created an atmosphere which underwrote the terrorism of White Leagues, the Klu Klux Klan and other racist organizations. Some Blacks suffered individual victimization such as lynching and rape. Collectively it *seemed* as if all their efforts at self-protection or safety in the South failed. This bleak moment in Black history encompassed what Rayford W. Logan termed the “Nadir” of Black history.⁸ To escape the violence, economic dependence, and overall southern white domination, interference, and oppression, Blacks left the South on a freedom trail headed west—the migration known as the “Exodus.”

By the end of the 1870s, just two years following the 1877 withdrawal of federal troops from the “Reconstructed” South, Blacks determinedly migrated westward. These disenchanted freedpeople (or “Exodusters,” as historian Nell Irvin Painter calls them) trekked from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Tennessee and established some 200 towns throughout Kansas and Oklahoma and as far west as California.⁹ According to Painter, between 1879 and 1881 as many as twenty thousand rural Blacks fled the “young hell” of the Lower South in search of the “promised land” of Kansas. Around this millenarian migration coalesced several major themes of Afro-American history from 1880 to 1915: the forces of terrorism and poverty that enveloped all rural Blacks, the lure of land and education, and a desire for the protection of Black women.

By 1915, hundreds of thousands of Black Americans (numbering almost 1.5 million by 1925) had left the South. This human tide continued throughout the first World War and beyond the depression years finally receding around 1940. Interestingly, the tide turned in succeeding decades. Blacks traveled back across the Mason-Dixon line via return migration to the South. Suffice it to say, as historian Darlene Clark Hine explains, “The significance of temporal and spatial movement to a people, defined by and oppressed because of the color of their skin, among other things, defies exaggeration.”¹⁰ In fact, the change over time from emancipation to the Civil Rights Era is characterized by freedom movements, both political and physical. As a result, migration becomes a very significant subject in American history because it moves the narrative of Black history forward.¹¹ Migration also serves as a major informant of Black urban history. The massive relocation of people partially explains the growth of northern metropolises. Yet, the topic of migration concerns much more than discussions surrounding a few major industrial centers. Migration studies contribute not only to a broader understanding of industrial change and development but also to subsequent changes in social and political practices.

However, migration studies must analyze gender in order to capture fuller portraits of Black freedom seekers or migrants. The intervention of the Black community, the continuity of southern folkways, the creation of Black urban folk culture, and the persistence of Black women’s work patterns all provide additional material for interpreting migration narratives. These exploratory avenues center Black women in the investigation of the effects of migration and the historical struggle for Black self-expression of the American dream. Black women, as it will be seen, were by no means

underrepresented in strides towards the “watchword” of the United States, “. . . that ever so elusive, but distinctly American property—freedom . . .”¹²

Literature Review

The most comprehensive synthesis of Great Migration historiography to date—*The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class and Gender*—examines this complex phenomenon.¹³ Historian Joe William Trotter, Jr., editor of the collection, explains that a century of research on urbanization, race relations, class formation, and other themes relating to migration formed the basis for this interpretive revision. Trotter divides the literature on Black migration into “three distinct, but interrelated” conceptual frameworks: 1) a racist analysis highlighting the tensions and subsequent accommodations between white and Black Americans; 2) a socialization argument focusing on the processes of “ghetto formation”; and 3) a proletarian approach analyzing Black migration as a historical process with much attention given to the emergence of an urban industrial working class. The periodization of these paradigms unfolds in three segments from the pre-World War I era up to the 1980s.¹⁴

The Race Relations Model of Black Migration fashioned in the pre-World War I era continued until the mid 1930s. W. E. B. DuBois, credited as the seminal contributor of this scholarship, produced *The Philadelphia Negro* in 1899.¹⁵ The thesis of the book reflected the purpose of DuBois’ research. Commissioned by the sociology department of the University of Pennsylvania, this work sought to answer the mounting concerns of race relations at that time. Therefore, DuBois framed his study around a series of questions regarding the conditions of Black migrants. He wanted to analyze the influence of the

urban experience upon the migrants as well as any relevant preparation they received before their arrival. The most significant contribution of this work (in terms of the migration process) pointed to the primary migratory patterns or precise geographical origins and destinations of early migrants. In general, this “pioneering study” discussed Black migration as a secondary theme as did most of the literature of this genre.¹⁶

The 1919 publication of *Negro Migration, 1916-17* by the United States Department of Labor, Division of Negro Economics, spawned the next pool of race relations model studies. Many of these works resulted from federally funded commissions or white philanthropic societies. Written largely by sociologists and economists, Black migration emerges within a larger context via cross-sectional analyses. These sources recognized the “pull” of Northern industrialization and the “push” of Southern economic decline as well as social and political injustices. These works included: Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration* (1918); Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (1920); Thomas J. Woofter, *Negro Migrations: Changes in Rural Organization and Population of the Cotton Belt* (1920); Charles S. Johnson, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* (1922); and Edward E. Lewis, *The Mobility of the Negro* (1931). These publications illustrated Black agency in the migration process by emphasizing the retention and transplantation of Southern (Black) culture.¹⁷ Largely sociological in approach, scholarship of this period also established Black migration as a social process. However, these texts failed to explore historical connections in detail.¹⁸

Unfortunately, Black migration scholars from the mid-1930s to the 1950s continued to neglect the notion of Black migration as a historical phenomenon. On the

surface, the themes of this literature appeared to be the same as those found at the turn of the century. However, their orientation provided informative interdisciplinary studies which focused on the social organization of the Black urban setting. The social science approach of these researchers utilized economics, political science, and anthropology to enlarge and expand studies of Black migration. Historians contributed very little to this conversation. Therefore, the historical underpinnings of the Black urban experience became the weakest link in migration historiography. The few scholars producing urban historical analysis injected many pathological discoveries.¹⁹

As a result, the 1960s and 1970s historical research on urban Blacks gained the phrase “ghetto model.” The ghetto model offered an historical understanding of the connection between urban housing and institutional segregation. This literature described the discriminating systems which facilitated the spread of urban poverty and residential segregation. Despite such analysis, the ghetto model overlooked migration as a social process. Consequently, it was devoid of the connection between Black self-determination and the formation of a Black industrial working class. The ghetto model lacked cultural linkages between southern and northern Blacks. Yet, the portrait of Black American “alley life,” i.e., urban poverty, racial violence and militant race consciousness, highlighted by the publications within this twenty year span facilitated further revisions.

These revisions sometimes took the form of criticism. For example, cultural historian Lawrence Levine challenged the ghetto model scholarship. He believed that the concept of ghettoization implied a “tragic sameness” to the myriad of Black urban experiences. Levine goes so far as to say that the notion of the ghetto also carries an ahistorical stigma. Levine’s critique, although writing in the 1980s, appropriately

describes the fallacy of this genre. The ghetto model of the 1960s and 1970s mistakenly interpreted the urban experience as a pathological process called ghetto formation as opposed to the emergence of a distinct Black urban *culture* with certain survival strategies and attendant vices. The latter interpretation emphasizes the connection between resistance (a theme evidenced in much of Black history) and the results of migration. That is to say, an “urban process” proceeded out of a Black pattern of power of choice, i.e., freedom, which characterizes post-Reconstruction Black history.²⁰

The final category of migration historiography, the Race/Class or Proletarian Approach of the 1980s, emerged from a series of Ph.D. dissertations. Social historian Nell Irvin Painter’s *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (1976) herald this school. Trotter’s *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-45* (1985); James R. Grossman’s *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (1989) and Richard W. Thomas’ *Life For Us Is What We Make It* (1992) are all monographs derived from Ph.D. dissertations. This genre redressed the pejorative interpretation of Black community building by displacing the ghetto formation thesis. The proletariat theme looked at how northern industry altered Black life as well as the impact of Blacks upon the urban North. However, this approach virtually ignored the Southern roots of Black migration as a characteristic feature of the Black urban, industrial, working class.²¹ Lack of attention to or analysis of the retention and transplantation of southern culture flawed the most contemporary “conceptualization of Black population movement.”²²

Historian Willard B. Gatewood demonstrates the significance of the southern background in his book *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*. Gatewood’s

historical treatment of class dynamics among the Black aristocracy shows the connection between well-to-do Black migrants and their southern cultural patterns. Gatewood illustrates the shared and similar values and ideals found in migrant social, political, economic, religious, and personal relationships. Gatewood develops his analysis by connecting the ancestry of his subjects via their class *and* cultural roots.²³ This is an approach which Trotter consistently found lacking in many works on urban Black class relationships.

Lastly, Trotter suggested the gradual emergence of migration studies as a new scholarly subfield. Black women's historian Darlene Clark Hine challenged future researchers to theorize about this subfield. Hine admonishes researchers to "squeeze and tease" primary source materials such as the records of Phillis Wheatley Homes, Black women's club minutes, church histories, photographs, and diaries. The next step involves combining this information with statistical and demographic data. This process, said Hine, would "... light up that inner world so long shrouded behind a veil of neglect, silence, and stereotype." Such "hine sight" she assures us "... will quite likely force a rethinking and rewriting of all of Black urban history."²⁴

In an attempt to take up Hine's challenge, I return to Hunter's Charlotte of Cleveland, Ohio, from my introduction. Jane Edna Hunter's autobiography recaps the tale of "poor Charlotte," as Ms. Hunter called her.²⁵

A Narrative Description —An Individual Informant

Upon her arrival at the Phillis Wheatley Home, Charlotte demanded an introduction to the superintendent (Ms. Hunter) and the cost of lodgings. Charlotte also

announced her interest in immediate employment.²⁶ Charlotte's confidence seemed to derive from her credentials. She claimed past work experience as a cook in an "aristocratic neighborhood" of Atlanta, Georgia. Therefore, in Charlotte's mind it was possible for her to obtain a job as a "first class cook" earning twelve dollars a week and private lodgings. But Charlotte's intention to "live on the lot," i.e., on the property but in a separate building, is the most telling in terms of the focus here.²⁷

While Charlotte's life on Atlanta's Peachtree Street is not recounted, her request to avoid occupancy within a white household makes it clear that she hoped for her own space. Charlotte wanted to save for herself the privacy and protection provided by the physical separation from her employers. Ms. Hunter attempted to persuade Charlotte that in the North servants lived in the house of their employers.²⁸ The following day, however, a triumphant Charlotte announced to Ms. Hunter that while on a walk through Cleveland "... down Prospect Street, ah seed way back in de yahds, houses wid big doahs an cuhtains at de windows, an dats whar de serbens lib, on de lot, same ez ah done say?" Ms. Hunter corrected Charlotte's finding. Hunter explained that the "big doors" were actually garages. Furthermore, the "curtains at the windows" enclosed the private lives not of female domestics, but the rooms in which the chauffeurs lived. Ms. Hunter resolutely repeated that, "Women servants lived in the house." Ms. Hunter concluded her recapitulation of Charlotte's determination, "Charlotte remained unconvinced until having found employment, she discovered for herself the whereabouts of her living quarters."²⁹ With this information, rhetorical and interpretive questions could yield more general factors regarding Black women's migration. For example, did Charlotte's simple appearance account for her stubbornness in light of Ms. Hunter's insistence that

“women servants lived in the house?” Or could it be that Charlotte resolutely clung to her interest in private accommodations because of past experiences?³⁰ Charlotte’s attitude about residence in a white household reflects the determination of earlier Black women to express their desire for freedom and safety through mobility and/or separate space. Hine summarizes that many Black women “quit the South” in order to protect themselves from sexual exploitation outside their homes and domestic violence within them. Hine asserts that the combination of domestic violence and economic oppression illuminates Black women’s motives for migration. Protecting their sexuality or “the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives” prompted many Black women to chose migration as a form of resistance.³¹ In fact, Hine called rape by white men a “. . . rarely explored push factor, that is, the desire for freedom from sexual exploitation.”³² I define it as the need for safety. Therefore, issues of safety as an condition of freedom were at the center of Charlotte’s (personal) and Black women’s (collective) migration. Although it is not clear why Charlotte left her job on Peachtree Street, the scant evidence Hunter provides does allow for some reasonable inferences regarding Black women’s migration, the continuity of southern beliefs and customs, as well as their fundamental need for safety.³³

Charlotte, a native of Mississippi came to Cleveland from Atlanta, Georgia. Her migration pattern demonstrates that she worked her way North.³⁴ Some scholars label this sort of movement as secondary migration. The idea of continuity regarding Southern folk culture leads to an examination of Charlotte’s sentiments about justice, civil rights, and judicial practices. This investigation reveals Charlotte’s concerns for personal safety. It also suggests a continuity of Southern Blacks’ perceptions of citizenship. These ideas constitute the cultural linkages ignored by migration studies prior to the 1990s. Hunter’s

details of Charlotte's experiences link these two aspects, i.e., Southern Blacks' perceptions of citizenship and migration. Hunter recalled,

She [Charlotte] had brought from Mississippi to Georgia, and thence to Cleveland, almost a wagon load of household furniture which she had placed in storage. Each week as she drew her weekly wages—this we did not learn until too late to warn her of her folly—she went to the storage depot and placed almost the entire amount in a washtub which was part of her heterogeneous collection there. Unfortunately, she confided the secret of her little hoard to one of her employers who, forthwith, set up a scheme to rob, poor, trusting Charlotte. She accused the maid of stealing a bedspread valued at \$700 exactly the amount of Charlotte's savings. Employing a detective, she had him accompany Charlotte to the storage depot, where they seized Charlotte's money and held it for the spread.³⁵

Although Ms. Hunter engaged an attorney on Charlotte's behalf, Charlotte refused to go to court when her case was called. Hunter explained Charlotte's actions by saying, "None of her family had been before a judge, and she would not *disgrace her people*. Her employer could keep the \$700.00—she knew that one day she would appear before a Righteous Judge. Poor Charlotte was so beset by fear of what a court might do to a Negro plaintiff who appeared against a white defendant, that she refused to trust a court which would doubtless have given an unbiased hearing of her case."³⁶ Where was Charlotte's "forthrightness of manner" in this instance? Why did Ms. Hunter, another Black woman, have confidence in the legal system? In other words, why was Hunter's faith in the judicial process dramatically different from Charlotte's perceptions?

The answers to these questions result from the interpretive impact of juxtaposing Charlotte's personal experiences in the South with the realities of Southern history, such as the 1896 Supreme Court decision of *Plessy v. Ferguson*; lynching; disenfranchisement schemes such as literacy tests, poll taxes, the grandfather clause and other Southern legislation aimed at circumscribing Black citizenship or "Jim Crow;" and terrorist groups

such as the Ku Klux Klan. Adhering to these societal restraints meant that Black people were constantly aware of their tenuous safety at the hands of whites. Subtle offenses such as not stepping to one side of the sidewalk for a white person, questioning the daily swindling by local store owners, enjoying the fruits of economic gain, or any other neglect of customary deference might result in an outbreak of violence.

In short, southern Blacks lived a “precarious existence” subject to the whims of white folk. Spencer Crew’s *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940* delineates *the rules* which governed Southern culture. Crew relays the testimony of James Plunkett, a former resident of Virginia, as evidence of this reality. Plunkett explained that the “least little thing you would do” could result in murder. This fact caused many southern Blacks to lead what Plunkett referred to as a “quiet life.” This culture of silence and survival protected Black life. Silence also served as the resistance technique refined by Black women. As they entered even more dangerous proximity to white oppression, i.e., domestic service, the private spaces of white households witnessed a gendered phenomena (a discussion to which I turn prior to the presentation of my methodology). Suffice it to say, regardless of *how* southern Blacks handled white authority, it is clear that Blacks who *appeared* to defer to *the rules* had a much easier time than Blacks who defied them.³⁷

Charlotte’s belief system as well as a concern for her personal safety linked her to the same realities of Southern Black life expressed by James Plunkett of Virginia. Both Charlotte and James allowed religious faith to comfort and combat their vulnerability. For example, a culturally resonant explanation of Charlotte’s sentiments toward the American judiciary lies in her reference to a “Righteous Judge.” Charlotte feared for her personal

safety because testifying against a white person before a court defied *the rules*; and *the rules* superseded Hunter's faith in the American judiciary. In the end, Charlotte never pressed charges against her employers. She took another assignment, worked, saved more money, and eventually returned to the South. With this example it is clear that Charlotte's cultural baggage constituted and maintained her world view despite her migration to the Mid-West.³⁸

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE—"ROOTEDNESS" AND MIGRATION

Maintaining an ideological connection between southern Black culture and Charlotte's "urban process" promotes an understanding of her actions. Charlotte employed tried and trusted survival strategies and subsequent codes of behavior for Black women. For example, Charlotte found a safe place at the Phillis Wheatley Home, a job, and employable skills before she left Cleveland and returned to Mississippi. To what did Charlotte return but the people who had seen her go? That is to say, not all southern Blacks left the region of their birth. In short, how can the Great Migration narrative include southern Blacks who never migrated? An even more provocative question would be, why did *Charlotte's* friends and relatives chose to stay at home? A related question ponders how migrants decided whether or not their moves were successful. Beyond ostentatious displays of manufactured goods such as "forty-five dollar suits," how did success look?³⁹ Did "success" mean permanent relocation? Did return migration signify failure? Such questions constitute some of the most neglected topics in migration historiography. Historian Jacqueline Jones highlights a possible train of thought. According to Jones, "... most migrants measured their success according to standards

set by their old friends and neighbors who stayed behind.”⁴⁰ The perceptions of nonmigrants and their experiences in *Charlotte's* absence serve as the subject of the proceeding discussion.

The stay-at-home communities

Somewhat concerned about the Black population movement of 1916 and 1917, the U.S. Department of Labor published a book on the topic in 1919. One contributor to the volume, R. H. Leavell, in his article on Mississippi states, “. . . the mere fact of a Negro's having moved out of his former home is no evidence that he has moved to a northern city.” Leavell explained that many Blacks left farms and plantations for local towns. Thus, those who did not journey North did not necessarily stay put. Therefore, migration does not mean total “uprootedness.”

Migration scholarship incorporates intra-regional travel as well as inter-state relocation. Many Southern Blacks left farms and rural areas for towns and urban cities within the South. Whether or not Blacks relocated to the North, the interwar years were characterized by movement.⁴¹

As early as 1920, Thomas Woofter provided a sophisticated system for differentiating between stay-at-home migrants and those who left the South entirely. He emphasized an analysis of *change* in rural organization, e.g., the effects of the boll weevil, floods, and industrialization on agricultural labor. Population shifts characterize such *change*, e.g., displaced rural residents sought non-agricultural employment. Secondary to population *change* are the *changes* in social and economic relations. This would include familial permission for young, female wage-earners to take jobs in urban

settings when their labor was not needed in the fields. Woofter's analysis (combined with recent interpretations of migration) helps avoid hasty and inaccurate conclusions. Black people obviously utilized freedom of movement in response and/or resistance to systematic *changes* in post-emancipation and industrializing American society. Therefore, mobility plays a significant role in Black southern history.

Southern Blacks perceived their conditions and alternatives in dissimilar ways. C. Eric Lewis, a Southern historian, sets the study of stay-at-home communities on more solid ground, "If the critical test of freedom is the license to leave, . . . then the ultimate freedom is . . . the right to remain."⁴² Two Black women whose families stayed "rooted" in the South are civil rights activist Rosa Parks and author/professor Margaret Walker Alexander.

Alexander explained that she and her siblings fared better than her migrant cousins, i.e., her aunts' and uncles' children in Boston, Chicago, and Cleveland. Alexander said, "We may not have made as much money as our cousins in the North, but we had more to show for it, and our families have grown."⁴³ Alexander's parents graduated from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. They returned to the South and raised a family. Exposure to northern society did not compel them to join their peers in permanent relocation. According to Alexander, the stay-at-homes built social institutions, families, churches, businesses and other social organizations. In fact, Alexander contended, not only was her family more financially successful (none of her migrant relatives owned their own homes), but they were also more structurally stable.

Stability and success

Inevitably, a comparison of stay-at-homes and migrant communities invokes a discussion of what constituted success. Alexander suggests that home ownership, family stability, community cohesiveness, and education defined success. In Alexander's view, all of this was built and sustained by those who stayed. Neil McMillen, a Southern historian, credits the stay-at-home communities for the strength and effectiveness of the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. McMillen states that the Civil Rights Movement reflected a tradition of Black protest. Dispelling the myth of passive, complacent, and terrified Black folk, Mcmillen's scholarship shows that the Civil Rights Movement did not initiate the political consciousness of southern Blacks.⁴⁴

While the Great Migration represents one dimension of Black protest, McMillen carefully examines the contradistinction, i.e., stay-at-home communities. According to McMillen, those who stayed were neither less discontent nor more docile, but rather a more negotiating and steady force of resistance. For example, McMillen brings to our remembrance the organized expressions of the Mississippi Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. McMillen admits that the "quiet pressure" of this group of women did not topple Jim Crow. Yet, these "quiet reformers" laid the foundation "for the more spectacular breakthroughs of later decades."⁴⁵

Rosa Parks' background, as it relates to her historic role in the Civil Rights Movement, suggests a foundational formula which groomed Southern (female) race leaders during the migration era. The labor and sacrifices of Parks' mother, the support and care of her extended family, and the encouragement and expectations of her community signaled Parks' life of responsible and productive activity.⁴⁶ Rosa Parks'

family history mirrored the socialization of historian Stephanie Shaw's professional Black women workers of the Jim Crow Era. Like the socially responsible Black women in Shaw's study, Parks' success had more to do with service and self-respect than materialistic gains. Although Parks lived with racial injustice, she fought for humanity. Surely, success must include the content of one's character and the development of effective Civil Rights leaders.⁴⁷

Historian Leslie Moch, a specialist on European migration, offers a comparative evaluation of migrants and nonmigrants. In plain language, Moch sees people within their struggles, i.e., Levine's "capable actors." Moch offers an historical analysis beyond statistical representations of growth and change. According to Moch, "... not everyone who left home was a success. Stability was a privilege."⁴⁸ A reminder that other women in different places and at different times have also migrated, I interpret Moch's analysis of success via stability as another component of what she calls the "migration portrait." Moch's stability thesis invites investigations of nonmigrating, Southern white communities as well as those whites who did quit the South. Migration historiography would be enriched by discussions of the success or stability of white migrants who may have relocated to the North for different or similar reasons.

Building on Moch's assessment of stability as a sign of success, it may be that some southern Blacks and whites did not consider migration because of their community building processes, i.e., they were already a part of stable environments. Albeit, those "homespaces" were also sites of race, class, and gender discrimination. However, using Rosa Park and Margaret Walker Alexander as examples, some southern Blacks did recognize the value and strength of their existing social, institutional, and familial

structures for facing such oppression. Urban historian Richard Thomas in his book *Life For Us Is What We Make It* talks at length about the community building strategies of Black Detroiters. Thomas identified the role of southern-born Black women in transplanting similar if not the same community strategies for survival, defense, and resistance.⁴⁹

Southern Black Women

Rosa Parks family history suggests a foundational formula which groomed Black female race leaders. Parks' father migrated North in order to make more money. Her mother, Leona McCauley, remained in the South and raised two children in Montgomery, Alabama. In addition to those responsibilities, McCauley's parents were sickly and her grandparents needed financial support. Parks great-grandfather tried to convince her mother to forget about him and ". . . make a better living for herself and her children but she chose to remain in the South." Although Parks does not say, her mother must have worked during her father's absence. McCauley's labor would have been indispensable.⁵⁰

The testimonies of both Rosa Park and Margaret Alexander Walker suggest that the labor of southern Black women sustained the non-migrant families left behind, i.e., stay-at-home communities. Many southern Black women supported their individual households, raised money for local churches, patronized area businesses, attended school programs, and participated in their children's neighborhood activities. In reality, the daily lives of nonmigrant, self-supporting, heads of household, domestic workers *is* the story of the stay-at-home communities. The "Leonas" of Southern history did not sit by and watch their husbands, lovers, friends, enemies, and relatives leave the South in search of

economic opportunity. Consequently, a big question emerges which impacts migration historiography as well as Southern history. For example, how did the lives and work of the stay-at-home “Leonas” affect Southern labor history? Jerry Ward of Tougaloo College had this to say,

Staying at home during the period 1915 to 1940 seems, . . . to have been about toughening . . . As relatives and friends ventured North, . . . one endured all the dehumanization of staying in one’s place to avoid lynching and other unpleasanties. And have we forgotten how very important were the Black women who were domestics? [The] . . . unnamed black women who did not confuse earning a living with loving a family on the other side of the tracks? And the Black children who grew to maturity in a racist world, always in the memorable phrasing of James Baldwin, bumping their heads against the low ceiling of their possibilities? Staying at home during the period of the Great Migration was certainly a matter of some complexity, and the greatest profit of staying in place was to enjoy a sense of community that the very geography of. . . (the North) precludes.⁵¹

Leona McCauley probably employed a variety of strategies to handle the pressures of sustaining her multi-generational family during her husband’s absence. She needed money for food, shelter, transportation, clothing, church offerings, and recreation. (Child care probably would not have been an expense. More than likely her parents or grandparents were able to care for her children until she returned home from work.) Drawing on statistics of married, nonagricultural, urban, working-class Black women, it is possible to infer that Leona McCauley was a domestic worker.⁵² In light of Ward’s observation, Leona McCauley must have known that no matter what her tasks may have been, her work was not who she was.⁵³

Why did Leona McCauley stay in the South instead of casting her lot with *Charlotte*? Was it because McCauley had voluntary and default familial responsibilities? Did those obligations necessitate a secure position as a live-out domestic or day-worker

in a white household? Could Leona have been a laundress? If so, then her “rootedness” via domestic employment assured her family’s survival, Rosa Parks’ consequent familial stability, and the eventual success of Black southerners’ political strivings. According to Margaret Walker Alexander,

Those who stayed, . . . built a nation within a nation . . . a completely Black nation within a nation. Segregation forced us into every profession, business and vocational endeavor. Those of us who stayed . . . have a sense of community; a pride in our living places and a sense of accomplishment with our youth. Our sense of values . . . we consider . . . sacred . . . Those of Us Who Stayed.⁴⁴

SAFETY AND DISSEMBLANCE

In order to interpret decisions and choices of Black women migrants, nonmigrant Black women, and other groups scholarship must embrace innovative methodology. I constructed a conceptual framework to this end. With theory preceding methodology and sound historical research, this framework offers further inroads toward re-constructing the Great Migration narrative as well as urban, labor, and Southern histories in light of Black women’s experiences. Through this exercise, gender specific themes enter the analysis of migration studies and other historical themes.

Understanding the thematic significance of Black women’s migration yields a poignant narrative. The scholarship of Black women historians provide the narrative line. Hine, Shaw, Higginbotham, Harley, Brown, Jones, Hunter, and Terborg-Penn all address aspects of migration in Black women’s lives. From the formation of thousands of Black women’s clubs to theoretical essays on race, class, and gender, Black women historians contribute to a burgeoning, historical reclamation.⁴⁵ However, the theoretical basis

for constructing a functional methodological approach for Black women's history comes from Hine.

Historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham refers to Hine's theory, the culture of dissemblance as "politics of silence." The culture of dissemblance refers to "... the behavior and attitudes of Black women that created the appearance of openness and disclosure but actually shielded the truth of their inner lives and selves from their oppressors."⁵⁶ This response to assaults upon Black womanhood promoted a coping mechanism that allowed Black women to function and survive. Hine also draws connections between dissemblance, migration, organizational protest, and institutional protection. The need for safety prompted hundreds of thousands of Black women to leave the South between 1915 and 1945. The same need motivated the formation of thousands of women's clubs. The dangers faced by newly arrived Black, female migrants were checked by working-girls associations and community households such as the Phillis Wheatley Association. And because the primary employment of migrant women continued to be domestic service (with attendant economic and sexual vulnerability), Black women utilized their "culture of dissemblance" in the North as well.⁵⁷

Dissemblance, like faith in God, appears to be another aspect of the Southern background packed in the migrant's cultural baggage. Dissemblance remained a component of domestic employment. Black women perfected their dissemblance skills as domestic servants. Dissemblance allowed Charlotte to speak with a "forthrightness of manner" to Mrs. Hunter upon their meeting. Charlotte's confidence about securing employment operated as a pretense. It covered her insecurity and vulnerability as a female migrant. If this were not the case then why did Charlotte, after working for awhile

in the North, fail to internalize Hunter's faith in the justice system and press charges against her employers? Did Charlotte "thoughtlessly" chat away her secret holdings because her southern survival techniques had taught her that all white people were trustworthy? No, Charlotte's experienced and anticipated powerlessness held her to a certain rapport with white people. She dissembled in order to carve out a comfort zone between herself and her new employers. Telling them of her savings stashed away in a Cleveland warehouse concealed Charlotte's desperate need for economic stability via employment. But, when her white employers stepped outside of that household, the locale of her dissemblance, then the reality of Charlotte's status disempowered her shield.⁵⁸

Charlotte's inner self struggled with race, gender, and class oppression. Taking a white person to court, accusing them of theft, and testifying against them before a judge was not dissemblance. It was taboo. Charlotte's simulated toughness shattered at the thought of crossing an internal *danger* zone. The reality of power inequality simply silenced her. In Charlotte's mind she would stand before that judge just as she was—an unprotected, unattached, poor, "colored" girl. That would be too close to the truth, too much like her inner self.⁵⁹

Middle-class race women also utilized this survival tool. According to Hine, the culture dissemblance finds its institutional expression in the founding of the 1896 National Association of Colored Women (NACW). Historian Paula Giddings' discussion of the rise of the Black women's club movement within the Booker T. Washington era explains Hine's assertion. Giddings argues that Black women leaders such as Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett expressed some discontent (and ultimately disagreement) with Washington's philosophical conservatism and conciliatory politics.

Yet, their emphasis on the training aspect of Black education for women coincided with his commendations. The impact of Washington's fame and power upon these middle-class, race women created an "appearance of openness."⁶⁰ That is to say, Washington wielded such power that his silence regarding a proposed, racial uplift project could dissuade the much needed patronage of white donors.⁶¹ To a certain extent, middle-class women dissembled in their dealings with Black male leaders in order to insure the support of the latter.

Stephanie J. Shaw's work on Black professional women compliments Giddings' interpretation. In her article on Black club women, Shaw explains the historical significance of Black women's self-help groups.⁶² The creation of the NACW represented another development of Black women's activism. That is to say, Shaw challenges the idea that the NACW represents the *beginning* of self-determination among Black women. The history of voluntary associations within the Black community, informs Shaw, indicates a "legacy of collective consciousness and mutual associations." From the cooperative, plantation childcare of the ante-bellum period to the free Black associations of the North, Black women sustained supportive and empowering communities. Shaw also demonstrates the diversity as well as commonality among various club women. Their individual histories document at least two recurring experiences, i.e., racial consciousness and community service. In sum, the history of the NACW and Black club women is rooted in a tradition of self-help or voluntary association.⁶³

Perhaps the most interesting observation pertains to Shaw's connection between migration and leadership. Unlike the mutual associations of the ante-bellum period, the voluntary associations of the Jim Crow Era included women who did not share common

local histories. Among many federated clubs throughout America, the geographic origins of club leaders illustrated that “the Black community” had grown. Club women represented a national versus a local agenda for change and uplift. No longer from the same families, churches, neighborhoods, or even regions, club women possessed individual race consciousness and commitment to service on yet another level. Shaw’s linkage of leadership and migration suggests an exciting expansion of the self-help model espoused by race leader Booker T. Washington, a connection which crosses the regional, class, and gender boundaries of earlier times.⁶⁴

Clearly, dissemblance was a survival technique of both ante-bellum and post-emancipation Black womanhood. Marred to the point of historical disfigurement the Black woman donned masks of supra-human strength and courage. Maligned as the sexual prey of white men, abused in relationships with Black men, and constantly economically vulnerable surely only divine patience and strength sustained her. Added to this feat was the pervasive insinuation that despite freedom and industrialization domestic service was the only job she could perform. As a result of these factors, Black women learned to speak with their feet what they dared not voice aloud. The seen danger of sexual exploitation caused Black women to hope with their backs toward their roots and their faces towards the North. The unseen dangers awaiting would then be addressed by the work of club women such as Jane Hunter.

Hunter’s dissemblance went beyond her work on behalf of migrant women. Hunter’s inner life can be disclosed by examining her correspondence with Nannie Burroughs, another club women and the founder of the Washington, D.C.-based, National Training School for Women and Girls (1909). Hine reveals that

In public Hunter maintained an imperturbable image of a strong, competent, fearless, resourceful Black women. She successfully developed an important social service agency, and carved out a sizable private space as well. for working girls and women without **appearing** to challenge the racial quo in Cleveland. Perhaps she was able to sustain this public image because she knew in the privacy of her study or propped up in bed at night, she could write about and share her inner self with a woman whom she trusted to understand. She dissembled well.⁶⁵

This interpretation of the correspondence between these two club women adds yet another piece to the methodological puzzle of Black women's history. Demonstrating that mastery of American history via an ingenuity of investigation, Hine's clarity of thematic connections intimates another component of a conceptual framework. Adding acuity of thought and judicious presentation of ideas to this process completes the methodological insurance needed to protect the historical value of Black women. Only by replicating disciplined and structured research methods will scholars of Black urban and labor histories significantly incorporate Black women. Insuring a historically sound and consistent gender dimension demands a more sophisticated solution than the additional of a few exceptional women and simply "stirring" them into the narrative. Historians of Black women must discover ways and means to incorporate the voices, the stories, and the lives of all Black women. Hine addresses this issue in the conclusion of her essay on dissemblance. She charges

At some fundamental level all black women historians are engaged in the process of historical reclamation, but it is not enough simply to uncover the hidden facts, the obscure names of Black foremothers. Merely to reclaim and to narrate their past deeds and contributions risks rendering a skewed history focused primarily upon the articulate, relatively well-positioned members of the aspiring middle-class. In synchrony with the reclaiming and narrating must be the development of an array of analytical frameworks that allow us to understand why Black women of all classes behave in certain ways and how they acquired agency. The culture of dissemblance is one such framework.⁶⁶

At heart, the culture of dissemblance is a theory of difference. It is one way of explaining why Black women behave in different ways. Yet, it may be an adaptable tool for developing other concepts in gendering the processes of Black urban and labor histories.

HINESIGHT METHODOLOGY

It is quite clear that the culture of dissemblance is one avenue towards re-constructing American history, particularly urban and labor histories via Black women's experiences. However, the question of the method or process for this historical reclamation still remains. I constructed this conceptual framework using the theory of dissemblance and the historiography of Black women's history. I call my contribution to this literature "Hinesight Methodology" in honor of the premier Black women's historian, Darlene Clark Hine. The theoretical strength of my conceptualization rests on its relevance to the reclamation of Black women's history. It is an addition to the work undertaken by Black women historians in the 1970s, 1980s, and the present.

Definition

Hinesight Methodology is a process for Black women's historical reclamation. It is constant interplay on four levels of intellectual inquiry—exploration, interpretation, application, and appropriation. Consequently, Hinesight Methodology is both a thought process and a research tool. The culmination of the process is scholarly re-constructions of American history. It is possible to diagram Hine's methodological approach for re-constructing American history with respect to Black women. This chart is a structural conceptualization of Hine's fourteen essays found in the volume for which the methodology is named. (See Table 1, page 31.)

TABLE 1 – Hinesight Methodology

HINESIGHT METHODOLOGY				
LEVEL	RESEARCH APPROACH	RULE	RESULTS	REFERENCE ARTICLE ARCHETYPE*
Exploration	Read widely	Mastery (i)	Acquire intimate knowledge of subject's secondary literature	"Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance"
Interpretation	"squeeze and tease"	Ingenuity (ii)	Ability to see the invisible and hear the silent	"Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1917-1945"
Application	Look for theme (Focus on gender dimension)	Clarity (iii)	Further implications for future research	"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: The Philanthropic Work of Black Women"
Appropriation	Comparative analysis	Acuity (iv)	Broadens interpretation of gender dimensions	"Black Women's History, White Women's History: The Juncture of Race and Class"

Further Elucidation of Rules

- I Also read any related materials (fiction/nonfiction; intersecting historical fields, etc.)
- II Scour & probe biography & autobiography, manuscript collections, & other primary sources, with an eye for connections
- III Scrutinize previous findings (ii) for specificity; locate one subject, group, theme, etc. (e.g., Black women professionals, Black nurses, migration, etc.)
- IV Culmination of levels: Should result in perceptual keenness; sharp and sensitive writing; serious analysis; significant conclusions; and shrewd discernment which prompts polished, publishable scholarly writing

* Source: Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History*, (New York: Carlson Publishing, 1994)

Thesis Findings

The present study was undertaken with what I define as Hinesight Methodology. This framework served as the primary conceptual paradigm. While some Black women historians have demonstrated and perfected related approaches it is wise to experiment on each level in succession. Therefore, what were the results incrementally?

Level one: Exploration

Migration is a human experience. Migration also serves as a central and distinguishing theme in African American history. Migration demarcates Black people's ante-bellum, post-emancipation, urban, and labor experiences. Secondary migration or travel to southern cities and towns precipitates southern urban history. Migration is also the impetus for northern urban and labor histories. Migration serves as the "watershed" of southern history. (Those who stayed behind or non-migrants politically galvanized their culture of resistance and radically transformed southern and American society.) Migration is a physical expression of the domination/resistance dialectic.

Level two: Interpretation

Assessing the patterns of mobility and effects of gender and class, as well as the historical presence of racism or institutional white oppression, elucidates the dynamics of the Great Migration. Black men and women did not migrate entirely for the same reasons nor did they necessarily follow the same route. Yet, there must be a systematic way for evaluating their decisions to quit the South. The domination/resistance dialectic is useful in that it explains migration as a survival and adaptive technique. But escaping slavery, running away from rape or the threat of rape, and fleeing habitual domestic abuse are not

the same types of movement as migrating to avoid employment deadlock, inadequate education, or subjugated political rights. A study of this subject begs an interpretive instrument which reflects the myriad of reasons for the Great Migration *and* the change over time from overt white oppression to covert tactics of race relations. The danger/mobility dialectic allows for a differentiating cast of historical agents and attending motives.

Level three: Application

Understanding the Great Migration as a labor migration has hitherto pushed the Black woman to a peripheral position due to the “naturalness” of her work. Domestic service fit the conventional gender division of labor for women. Thus, reclaiming Black women’s participation in the Great Migration rests on a methodical treatment of their work history. The historiographical superstructure of the Black women’s social and cultural history asserts her primary or definitive identifier as that of mother or nurturer. Accepting this fact, however, should not preclude Black women from a more central role in this monumental labor migration. Moving beyond the constructs of Black women’s social and cultural history permits a more, multi-dimensional, historical character. Her work within family government in her own household (i.e., the homemaker) and in the home of white employers (i.e., the domestic servant) should not devalue her labor history. Domestic service is employment. Neither should traditional occupational experience in domestic service escape the rigorous intellectual analysis and scholarly discourse of Black women’s urban history.

Using the danger/mobility dialectic and borrowing from conceptual frameworks such as Carole Marks' core/periphery model, Richard Thomas' community building process, and the notion of "narrative" espoused by Farah Jasmine Griffin, a revision of the Great Migration discloses a consistent gender dimension. If dissemblance is the Black woman's weapon embedded within the domination/resistance dialectic of the Jim Crow South, then the need for safety is her urban corollary. The need to protect or "save" migrant girls and women propelled the work of Black club women beyond their all-encompassing exhausting yoke of eradicating negative stereotypes of Black womanhood. The work of the Phillis Wheatley Association and Jane Edna Hunter as well as other middle-class, race women and self-help institutions responded to the seen and unseen dangers of working-class Black women's labor migration.

Level four: Appropriation

Evidenced throughout the study were several factors that could be considered for careful and thorough comparative investigations of Black women's labor migration. These factors include region of employment, marital status, and type of work performed. In terms of locality, Black women's residential combinations included *southern rural*, *southern urban*, and *northern urban*. In terms of type of work performed and primary tasks involved, the choices as determined by residence could be organized in the following manner. (Those positions which were primarily occupied by single women with no children are followed by an asterisk.)

In the southern rural setting, non-agricultural jobs such as homemaking and domestic service predominated the employment continuum, followed by agricultural

laborers or field hands. Married as well as single women worked in these areas. Some families supplemented their seasonal, agricultural employment with domestic service in nearby towns or via migration to southern urban settings (*). The southern urban scene provided employment opportunities in domestic service via "day work" versus the traditional live-in domestics of the agricultural South. Married women in particular preferred the system of "day work." Some women took advantage of low-paying unskilled and semiskilled industrial work in positions such as tobacco handlers. Primarily, Black women employed in "industry" also provided domestic services such as scrubwomen in cotton mills. Married women often successfully held these positions. Oyster shuckers in coastal towns serve as an example of seasonal workers. These laborers often migrated from their coastal localities into urban areas in order to supplement family incomes with domestic or "industrial" jobs (*). Finally, professional Black women operated within their respective careers when able and performed domestic service when required.

Northern urban areas sustained the availability of domestic service jobs. Initially the live-in system predominated (*). While single women comprised most of the live-in domestic servants, some married women brought their households additional income with "day work," such as taking in laundry. Also, a few married women made relative economic gains through tenuous, low- to no-status positions within the war industries. Some industrious and determined women found measures of independence in entrepreneurial endeavors as Madame C. J. Walker beauty consultants. Middle-class and married women labored selflessly in philanthropic efforts such as the Phillis Wheatley Association. While "race" work may not have paid wages, the service of these Black

women must also be categorized as labor. Black women professionals such as writers and teachers found opportunities often using their mobility as an asset (*). Other Black women professionals such as nurses, ministers, physicians, and librarians often balanced their career with marriage. The final category includes factory and business positions such as clerks and waitresses. Married women juggled office cleaning, industrial jobs, or domestic work with their household responsibilities. Some managed to incorporate jobs in the clothing industry as seamstresses with their roles as wives and mothers.

Class is embedded within "career choices." Where there was little to no occupational recourse then by default working-class women chose domestic employment. Middle-class or professional Black women often relied on domestic service. Oftentimes, when Jim Crow prohibited their privilege of occupational choice. They chose wage-earning work when the exhibition of their training and talents was restricted. This pragmatic and responsible explanation substantiates their classification as wage-earning professionals. Marital status affected the preference of and access to certain types of jobs. Some were primarily held by single women with no children, as noted with asterisks above. Migration repeatedly offered single women more options and job experiences. They often relocated as a result of finding employment.

Women on the move, a history of laborers, suggests a gender dimension of the Great Migration. The gender dimension of Black labor migration correlates danger and mobility. The danger of continued sexual exploitation, poverty, and hopelessness prompted many Black women to follow the North star. The danger awaiting the unattached, economically vulnerable female migrant prompted middle-class Blacks to create self-help and intervention agencies. In short, throughout the portrait of female

migration, i.e., from her home or departure through her journey to the arrival at her destination, the danger/mobility dialectic defines Black women's need for safety. That is to say, Black women's need for safety had a "watershed" quality or effect.

My Hinesight Methodology allows us to use the danger/mobility dialectic and the theory of dissemblance in order to explain Black women's migration process via their need for safety. With my conceptual framework I begin to question how Black women felt about their spatial communities while they remained rooted in the South. I also analyze the continuum of their perceptions in light of Black women's need for safety within other parts of the "migration portrait."

Safety was procured in different ways depending on residence (i.e., region and locale), occupation, marital status, and familial/class structure. There were both preventive and prescriptive safety measures along the migration continuum. An example of working-class, southern/rural *preventive* safety measures was allowing a female family member to experience short distance, seasonal migration to nearby towns. An example of *prescriptive* safety measures among northern/urban, middle-class, professional Black women was the establishing of boarding homes and training programs. In sum, the phase of movement determined the community response. Black women's "migration portrait"—from departure, journey, and destination—involved the migrant as well as her support system. Charlotte's story as told by Hunter illustrates *prescriptive* safety measures. Charlotte's southern roots suggest such safety measures as faith, dissemblance, and secondary, labor migration. Attempts to reconstruct *Charlotte's* feasible Southern background will illustrate other *prescriptive* safety measure.

“NO OCCUPATION”

“No Occupation”

She has “no occupation.”

38

Black Women's Work in the Southern Context

The goal of this second chapter is to find *Charlotte* prior to her migration. Locating *Charlotte* involves an investigation of Black women's work from the late nineteenth century until the first wave of the Great Migration. The location technique employed in finding *Charlotte* or charting her migration pattern is an example of Hindsight Methodology.

In the autobiography, Hunter's Charlotte appeared out of nowhere. Charlotte migrated from Mississippi, to Georgia, and then to Cleveland. Hunter's papers at the Western Reserve Historical Society shed no other light on Charlotte's past. However, Charlotte did exist before she met Jane Hunter. The few paragraphs in Hunter's autobiography does not record all of "herstory." Yet, accounting for her experiences is a vital and important step in reconstructing the Great Migration narrative. The "squeeze and tease" which pieces together a fuller account of her life also ascribes to Hunter's Charlotte the agency which belongs to the migrants.²

The mistress-slave relationship of the ante-bellum South culminates in the domestic service rendered by Black women during late nineteenth century, industrializing America. In a period when increasing numbers of people performed unskilled, manual labor in an industrial setting, domestic service persisted as the traditional, premodern employment for Black women. Historian Tera Hunter asserts, "Domestic work was synonymous with Black women in freedom as it was in slavery, and the active efforts by whites to exploit labor clearly circumscribed Black lives."³ In another article, Hunter sets the date of Black women's entrance into the urban, southern economy. By the 1860s Black women began to make their way into southern cities. Reconstruction (1865-1877) and Redemption or the

“New South” (1877-1913) produced hardly any occupational opportunities for Black people. Most of the population remained in the rural South and continued in agricultural labor, but Black women sought work in southern cities in disproportionate numbers. They migrated from farms and plantations that demanded male labor or family units.”⁴

In order to fully understand the significance of Black women’s work and subsequent migration, the historical context in which they lived must be addressed. Southern historian George Brown Tindall provides an exceptional regional history in his book *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945*.⁵ Tindall labeled the 1913 election of President Woodrow Wilson “a kind of vindication for the South.” Southern Democrats assured Wilson’s victory by anchoring their candidate with majority votes in eleven former Confederate states. With the election of Wilson the rebel South had “come back to rule the Union,” and Washington, D. C., facilitated their transition from national embarrassment to government leader.⁶

This exuberance, however, lasted less than a year. The events of August 1914 struck a death blow to the cotton industry. World War I erupted in Europe and disrupted the Southerners’ plans for prosperity. With the blockage of export markets caused by the international crisis, the Cotton Kingdom lost about half its value. This price collapse and resulting economic desperation lasted almost a year. Yet, the benevolent effects of the war overshadowed initial levels of Southern discomfort. Southern Blacks benefited from these changes as well.⁷

Quite a few of the war gains fell in the lives of Black folk directly and indirectly. Nearly a million Southerners participated in the war effort. Coastal communities came to life through needed navel installations and shipbuilding. Concomitantly lumber production expanded via the demand for army housing and wooden ships. Tindall evaluated the

South's economic situation as "ubiquitous war prosperity." Farm prices increased, industry grew, and workers," even sharecroppers," said Tindall," became acquainted with the feel of folding money." The "rare wealth" among Southern Blacks resulted in surprising reports of debt settlements, forty-five dollar suits, six dollar shirts, eight dollar shoes, and "... most spectacular of all, the automobile invasion of the rural South." Most of the growth and expansion occurred in Southern cities and towns while the majority of the region remained farmland or rural.⁸

From 1914 to 1918, Southern Blacks who benefited directly from the war, e.g., laborers in coastal towns, enjoyed relative prosperity. When the plenty of the post-war years subsided, however, agricultural workers suffered displacement and destitution. Tindall included contemporary reports from Southern towns of Black people walking the streets and begging for work. The presence of rural Blacks in Southern towns and cities suggest at least two things. The brief boom of the war years provided enough discretionary income such that travel resulted in the relocation of workers. Maybe many of whom ended up stuck in southern towns and cities after depleting their resources. The "automobile invasion" of the rural South may have encouraged ill-planned and irresponsible car pools; pleasure trips filled with relatives and friends who had no intention of permanent relocation. Perhaps the automobile brought serious migrants without adequate resources for a stable transition. Secondly, the industry growth and expansion in coastal communities accommodated a pattern of seasonal migration in which workers hustled between work opportunities.⁹

With falling crop prices, foreclosures, and bankruptcies, migratory labor became a condition of the farm labor system. As a result housing among rural Blacks reflected a make-shift, transitory, and overall unstable situation. Tindall detailed

For peak seasons and odd jobs landlords could tap a pool of floating wage laborers who moved in and out of sharecropping. Tenancy, although a static system, constantly stirred farm workers to move in search of improvement or debt evasion . . . ¹⁰

The cultural landscape of the Black rural, working-poor captured a depressing and often hopeless condition. Poverty and drudgery characterized their lives. Lynching, rape, and Jim Crow exacerbated the harsh realities of their destitution. The invasion of the boll weevil and the floods of 1915 and 1916 conferred nature's judgment upon them as well.¹¹

By the early summer of 1916, the beginning of the Great Migration signified Southern Blacks' response to their dire circumstances. With the country's entrance into World War I, the subsequent drain of the workforce, and the lack of immigrant replacement, opportunities lay to the North. Black men took to the railways and roads for yet another try at the American dream. Responding to the availability of war industry jobs in the North male migrants left wives, children, and households in search of their family's protection from the "reign of terror." They went looking for an escape and escape from a life time of desperation.¹²

As a whole southern Black women experienced occupational confinement in the field of domestic service. Black women accounted for ninety percent of servants in the urban South.¹³ Even in Southern towns and cities, the majority of Black female urban laborers missed out on the shift to time-oriented production or industry. Deprived of the benefits associated with industrialization, a Black female servant performed virtually the same kind of work as her slave foremother.¹⁴ This is not to say that Black women of the post-slavery era did not exercise their "choice power" or freedom in job selection. Black women asserted some preferences in terms of the specific kind of domestic service they performed. Laundresses, whose positions constituted the largest proportion of domestic

workers, were usually married, older women with children. Single and younger women tended to accept positions as child-nurses and general maids. By the early 1920s, many of these workers did not reside in white households. They provided day service. Historian Tera Hunter states that this spatial agreement helped “. . . maximize the distance between slavery and freedom.” The “live-out” arrangement, as David Katzman and Hunter call this system of day work, allowed Black women to avoid totally sacrificing their own familial obligations to those of her white employer. Black married women, supplementing the insufficient income of their husbands, preferred a live-out system. Harley explains, “Poverty, not a Black cultural ethos favoring married women’s wage labor, was the most significant explanatory factor for married Black women’s larger presence in the labor force. Greater economic pressures on Black households, largely resulting from the low wages and seasonal employment of many Black men, forced a larger number of married Black women to work for wages.”¹⁵ The day’s work system reportedly paid less than live-in work, but it allowed southern household workers more time with their families.¹⁶ According to Jones, the fifteen or twenty percent of live-in domestic servants of white households were probably young, single women.¹⁷

Of course, many women performed agricultural labor. A detailed description of one woman’s agricultural work during the 1920s can be found in the autobiography of Sara Brooks, a 1940 migrant to Cleveland, Ohio. Hard work and family survival summarized Brooks’ formative years. Her father taught her that “laziness’ll kill you.” Therefore, he determined to save her life with field work. The Brooks owned their land, chickens, and hogs. The two-parent household of eleven children practiced cooperative labor. According

to Brooks,” we all worked hard—we all worked hard and we got what we could—and my father took care of all the family.”¹⁸

As an adult Brooks became even more entrenched domestic service. Brooks migrated from her rural home in Orchard, Georgia to Bainbridge, Georgia after separating from her husband. While in the southern town of Bainbridge, Brooks worked for several families as a domestic servant. Her brother worked in a sawmill, but the owners of the local hardware store knew him as well. Through this familial reference, Brooks secured a job as a domestic servant. She said, “I got the job through my brother. I was doin day’s work for them. I made biscuits and cleaned house—just mop the floors and I’d dust the furniture an wash clothes . . .”¹⁹ Brooks’ job title, however, disguised the diversity of tasks she performed. Her line of work allowed for a myriad of labor. For example, Brooks next job, also secured through her brother, took her into a doctor’s office. Brooks answered the telephone in his office, took messages, and milked the doctor’s cow every morning and evening. She left his office around two o’clock “. . . with those towels what he’d use and bring em home, wash em, boil em out, and dry em and press em and fold em up and take em back the next mornin.” This job paid three dollars and fifty cent a week.²⁰

Black women accounted for ninety percent of servants in the urban South.²¹ They performed a variety of tasks regardless of the initial employment title. Whether they labored as washerwomen, maids, cooks, or child-nurses, the daily schedule of these wage earners could included cooking, table service, heavy cleaning, laundry, and marketing. David Katzman’s work on domestics in industrial America explains that

While the abundance of servants in the South fostered specialization, the workers themselves did not become specialists. In white eyes, the work tasks of Blacks were interchangeable. A woman could behired one day to cook, another day to wash, and a third day to clean house. The hiring conditions were controlled by white

employers The southern racial etiquette dictated that it could not appear that Blacks controlled their own work.²²

A typical routine of a southern day worker or married domestic involved an early rise, a hurried meal for her own children, and a timely departure to the white household in which she worked. As a result, Black children often went unsupervised or entrusted to other working, albeit less constrained, neighbors or relatives. The children of domestic servants gingerly survived periods of hunger, neglect, and environmental hazards. In redress, working mothers attempted to glean any available daylight hours to check on their households. The overarching reality, however, found them gathering their little ones in the late evening to share in the remainder of the white family's meal and the remnants of their mother's time and energy.²³

The female urban servants of the post-Civil War South remained in an atmosphere "heavy laden with the trappings of slavery." Customary deference, white female eccentricity, and sexual abuse by white men characterized the threats of unprotected, prolonged exposure to white domination. Southern racial etiquette—the dominance of whites and the subordination of Blacks—took the form of public segregation at all levels. Ironically, domestic employment remained an acceptable exception. Jim crow did not disturb the intimacy of Black female presence in white households. No where is this more evident than in the relationship between white and Black women. Historian Jacqueline Jones describes the repressed mistress whose prison of patriarchy disabled her economic and political potential.

White mistress served as the owner of the establishment [her household] and the manager of labor [supervision of household workers]. In addition to this responsibility, Jones describes the cause and effect of individual white women's "wildly erratic personalities." Convinced of their own racial superiority, white women tried to control their employees via emotional and physical violence.

This 'disordered temperament' toward Black women was especially unhealthy in white households where a "... husband and son considered a servant their 'special prey.' ""²⁴

Black women derived a sense of "safety" through what historians identify as resistance strategies. Safety from white domination was achieved by a self-made list of priorities. For example, Black female urban laborers realized that their community protected them and provided survival skills for hostile environments.²⁵ Therefore, Black female urban laborers chose to participate in revivals, fund-raisers, and other communal activities within their neighborhoods. Black women missed work to nurse ill family members. Workers also declared their own holidays by not reporting to work. Actual holiday leaves were a rarity. Domestic service exacted work seven days a week.²⁶

Black women, particularly married women, preferred day work because it provided the option to return home. In so doing they limited the amount of time and energy exacted by their employer. Women's historian Elizabeth Clark-Lewis' studies of domestic servants poignantly illustrate this point. One of her projects focused on the experiences of twenty three, Black female domestics who migrated to Washington, D.C., during the period 1900 to 1926. Clark-Lewis described the power shift which accompanied the transition from live-in to day work.

Household workers dictated their pace, set their own priorities for daily tasks, and directed the processes by which they completed designated chores. Working with a greater degree of autonomy and with the knowledge that "this work had an end," Black women rejected the uniform and other symbols of live-in status, including twenty-four access to their labor.²⁷ Equally important, the shift from live-in servant to day worker permitted Black women to demarcate between their lives at work and the lives they lived. May Anna Madison, a former domestic, told one interviewer that "... what I am doing doesn't have anything to do with what I want to do or what I do when I am doing for myself ... my work is just what I *have* to do to get what I want."²⁸

Sara Brooks echoed Madison's declaration. Settled and employed in Cleveland, Brooks reflected on her work experiences. Brooks began her life of work on a farm in rural Georgia, migrated to the Southern town of Bainbridge, Georgia, returned to her home in Orchard, Georgia, and eventually relocated to the Southern city of Mobile, Alabama. Brooks remembered

When I went to Mobile, I hadn't given no thought to what I would be doin, but at that time when we come along, to me it seemed that we wasn't gonna get nowhere nohow past the farm and past workin for white peoples because the colored women mostly could either do fieldwork or babysit or cook and clean house in the South. That's where I was, see, and I didn't see that there was somethin better ahead until I got away from it. But when I came to the North, David Katzman offers a look at domestic service and women's resistance throughout industrializing America. Taking days off, i.e., , the "personal days" of contemporary employment, quitting, or habitually, switching jobs constituted yet another form of Black female power in the North as well as the South. Attempting to maintain some autonomy over her workplace and retain some self-respect in the process, Black women, according to Katzman, "... moved in and out of the labor market as circumstances in their personal lives demanded." The beauty of this scholarship, including Tera Hunter's and Sharon Harley's work on domestic service, is that it eloquently testifies of the ways Black women controlled their work.²⁹

In short, white authority never went unchecked. Hunter, Jones, and Katzman confirm that Black women's resistance took a variety of forms. The "Negro problem" of laziness, poor work performance, absenteeism, quitting, tardiness, early departures, and refusals to provide unbroken hours (or days) of hard, steady labor masked the methods of Black response.³⁰ The customary "service pan" (leftover foodstuffs from the white family's meals which supplemented the insubstantial earnings of domestic servants) could be expanded to include "borrowed" staple foods. For example, the doctor for whom Brooks worked allowed her to milk his cow twice in the evening time. The second pail belonged to Brooks." I would carry that home to my sister-in-law to cook with and for the kids," Brooks relayed. She even confessed to "borrowing" from one employer. While in Bainbridge she

performed day work for a white woman who allowed her to take food home to her daughter. One time when she left work Brooks carried a white potato with her. Explaining that she had nothing to eat, Brooks admitted that only once had she stolen her dinner. But she and her daughter would have gone hungry without that unknown gift.³¹

Charlotte does not seem to be among these married and single-parent, working-class, urban laborers. The sparse information Hunter provides suggest that she worked her way from Mississippi to Atlanta, Georgia and finally to Cleveland. (The furniture that Hunter's *Charlotte* owned and placed in storage attests to her acquisition of some material resources.) If *Charlotte* had a husband then she probably would not have lived on Peachtree Street with her employers. If *Charlotte* had children her secondary migration probably would not have carried her as far away as across Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia.

Maybe *Charlotte* was among the South's middle class Black women. If so, then *Charlotte* may have been involved in groups such as the National League for the Protection of Colored Women, the Association of wage-earners, the National Training School for Women and Girls or the National Association of Colored Women. Was *Charlotte* an educated club woman? Could she have been a college trained teacher, nurse, social worker, or librarian?³²

The middle-class or professional Black women of southern cities primarily belonged to associations and clubs dedicated to some aspect of women's lives. Historian Stephanie J. Shaw believes that these women exercised what she calls "socially responsible individualism." A highly individualistic, child-rearing strategy, socially responsible individualism imparted an "achievement orientation" to these fortunate females. The price of their educational and social gains had to be paid with committed and intelligent service in

the best interest of their communities. In so doing, middle-class, professional Black women practiced a self-affirming, social doctrine. Getting at the roots of this community commitment, Shaw successfully analyzes the processes by which Black professional women became race leaders.³³

Many parents, preachers, teachers, and leaders wanted to protect their daughters from the sexual and economic vulnerability of domestic work. The imminent danger of direct white male attacks characterized that line of work. Yet, educated, professional Black women were not exempt from Southern racial code or Jim Crow. Focusing on three generations of women between emancipation and the second world war, Shaw demonstrates that three institutions shaped the lives of Southern, professional Black women, developed their potential and protected their ambitions. Formative and definitive, Black families, churches, and schools, brought offered clear instructions on what a woman ought to be. These socializing institutions taught their daughter to work and work hard. The results of hard work yielded careers in feminine professions such as nursing, education, library science, and social work.³⁴

Their ability to perform in chosen careers was often circumscribed by segregation. Therefore, Black professional women “worked for a wage when necessary and where possible.” Even if this meant taking a job as a domestic. Shaw emphatically demonstrates that Black professional women of the South *worked*. They worked in their career fields, performed unpaid labor as homemakers and community builders, and often included paid, domestic service outside the home when needed.³⁵

It cannot be over emphasized that these educated urban women were workers. Their professional status, particularly as teachers, nurses, social workers, and librarians placed

them a rung or two above the *primary* occupation of their wage-earning counterparts, i.e., domestic service. Many professional women, however, were also wage earners. A personal letter to a Tougaloo alumna reveals the place of work in the life of one, middle-class Black woman. This letter, found in the archives of a historically Black college, tells of one woman's interest in migration. It also reveals her priorities regarding work and migration.

In a letter written on September 25, 1928, Eddie, a graduate of Tougaloo College, informed another alumna of her interest in moving to Chicago. Eddie's friend, Carrie Wiggins, migrated to the Windy City after graduating from Tougaloo.³⁶ Carrie Spears nee Wiggins graduated from Tougaloo High School in Tougaloo, Mississippi, circa 1927. (See Figure 1, page 51.) Carrie migrated to Chicago shortly after her graduation. At the time the letter was written, Eddie worked in a small southern town. Although gainfully employed, Eddie longed to join her classmate in the North. While holding a teaching position in Walnut Grove, Mississippi, Eddie told Carrie, "Girl I envy you your [sic] city life. You may look for me as soon as my school closes I am teaching domestic science out here at this school [Leake County Training School]."³⁷ Towards the conclusion of her letter, Eddie explained her perception of opportunities in the North, her attitude toward travel in general, and her intentions regarding migration.

I am planning to run over to Tougaloo sometime soon. I'll see everybody and tell you everything. I spent most of the summer in Jackson and . . . That's why I am coming North and have a little fun before I die. Say, are things cheap up there? I want a good looking spring coat. I have a good winter coat. You know I can wear a spring coat down here. I am cleaning up in serving and cooking here. These people are a fool about me. You know James never did answer my letter. Honestly I could like that man if he would let me. Are you going to work[?] I am going to get me a job when I come up there. I got a decent looking wardrobe trunk and that is all except a few school dresses.

Give my love to Mr. Wiggins [sic] and your sister also the Tougaloons who know me. Lewis Hill's sister—Mable is married and living up there. Her address is 4536 46 st. Call on her sometime. Be a sweet girl and write to me at once.

Lovingly,
Eddie

P.S. Send me some candy.¹

Eddie mentions twice that she wants a job. Yet, Eddie does not communicate with any real sense of urgency her desire for employment in Chicago. For example, she does not ask Carrie to send her any names of schools. Neither does she share the news of any initial contacts or job leads. In short, Eddie does not mention through which channels her job will be secured. Eddie's concern with her wardrobe, keeping in touch with various male friends, staying abreast of the news at their alma mater, having "fun," and solicitation for candy are



Figure 1 – Carrie Wiggins, Tougaloo High School 1926

(Courtesy of the Lillian Pierce Benboom Room, Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi)

radically different requests than the concerns expressed by migrating working-class, Black women. In letters from prospective female migrants to the *Chicago Defender* it is clear that employment, finances, and a willingness to work characterize their mind set. The *Chicago Defender*, a weekly Black newspaper, greatly contributed to the flood of migrants, particularly those headed to Chicago.³⁹ A juxtaposition of Eddie's correspondence and letters of prospective female migrants to the *Chicago Defender* facilitates a "squeeze and tease" comparison.

Jacksonville, Fla., April 29, 1917

My dear Sir: I take grate pleazer in writing you. as I found in your Chicago Defender this morning where you are secur job for men as I realey didn no if you can get a good job for me as am a woman and a widowe with two girls and would like to no if you can get one for me and the girls. We will do any kind of work and I would like to hear from you at once not any of us has any husbands.

Natchez, Miss., Oct. 5, 1917

Dear Sir: Now I am writing you to oblige me to put my application in the papers please. I am a body servant or nice house maid. My hair is black and my eyes are black and smooth skin and clear and brown. Good teeth and strong and good health and my weight is 136 lb

Vicksburg, Miss., May 7, 1917

Dear Sir: This comes to say to you will you please inform us of some place of employment. We are working hear at starvation wages and some of us are virtually without employment willing to accept any kind of work such as cooking, laundering, or as domestics no objection to living in a small town, suburb or country. There are fifteen wants work. You can just write me and I will notify them please let me hear from you at your earliest convenience.⁴⁰

In comparing Eddie's letter with Carrie and those of the migrants to the *Defender* some qualifications should be made. Eddie's correspondence was a personal letter. Most of the letters written by migrants to the *Chicago Defender* were strictly business letters. The other contrasts, however, reveal more about class distinctions than familiarity with the addressee.

Basically, Eddie does not need assistance with migration. Her mobility pattern implies that she has ways and means to move about. Eddie left the campus of Tougaloo College, about twenty minutes outside of Jackson, Mississippi, and secured a job teaching domestic science in a rural town. (Practice housekeeping for eleventh grade girls occupied an important place at Tougaloo. More than likely, both Eddie and Carrie were required to take this course. Eddie may have appropriated some of the techniques she learned at Tougaloo for her teaching position in domestic science. See Figure 2, Page 53.) She spent her vacation time in Jackson, a southern city. If Eddie were to relocate to Chicago she would not qualify as a “southern leaf blown north.” Levine’s assessment of “actors capable of affecting at least some part of their destinies” fairly applies to Eddie. Therefore,

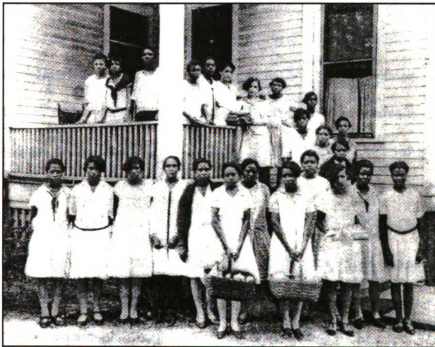


Figure 2 – Practice Housekeepers at Tougaloo College 1927-28

(Courtesy of the Lillian Benboom Room, Tougalou College, Tougaloo, Mississippi)

if Eddie decided to move, it was an option motivated by choice versus a consequence of the “wind of destitution.”⁴¹

Despite Eddie’s constant movement, her letter indicates that she found these places “lonesome.” She wished to be with her friends in Chicago. Eddie questioned Carrie as to whether or not Carrie *will* work versus *where* or *when* Carrie will work. This question implies that Carrie may have had options not available to most female migrants.⁴² In contrast, Hunter’s Charlotte inquires about employment at the doors of the Phillis Wheatley Association *immediately* upon her reception. Likewise, the content of most of the letters to the *Defender* emphasized the importance of finding immediate employment. While Carrie graduated from Tougaloo and journeyed to the Windy City with her father and sister probably in their private automobile. While, figuratively, most uneducated, working-class migrants made the journey on their own two feet, i.e., through secondary migration.⁴³ That is to say, the travel experiences of some of these women consisted of frequent moves in search of employment versus one long-distance journey to a definite appointment.

Hunter’s Charlotte arrived in Cleveland via railway and needed the intervention of a stranger to get her to the Phillis Wheatley Association. If she had any college friends in town, i.e., someone like Carrie or even an *acquaintance* such as “Lewis Hill’s sister, Mable,” maybe she would not have needed the minister’s aid.⁴⁴ Could *Charlotte* have been a Tougaloo alumna or any other middle-class professional Black woman? (See Figure 3, Page 55.) From the evidence presented *Charlotte* was not among this group of female migrants. Two remaining groups of working Black women may be of help. Is *Charlotte* among the scant number of wage-earning, Black women employed outside of domestic

work? Or will she be found in the final category of young, single, migrating, Black female wage earners?

Black women of Charlotte's time had few alternatives regarding employment. The mainstay of their economic survival was domestic work regardless of temporary gains in other areas. Private household work persisted as the single most important source of gainful employment of American women throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the period 1890 and 1920, the proportion of Black women so engaged increased by forty-three percent. By the twenties, more than half of all employed Black women worked as domestic servants. By 1930, the figure had risen to seventy percent.⁴⁵



Figure 3 – Group of College Women at Tougaloo College 1927

(Courtesy of the Lillian Pierce Benboom Room, Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi)

Yet, opportunities for the few unskilled, higher paying manual labor were far more appealing than domestic service. Whether an oyster shucker in a Georgia coastal village, a scrubwoman in a Mississippi cotton mill, or a “rehandler” in a Virginia tobacco factory, these “escapees from domestic service . . . were not easily transformed into ‘modern’ factory workers.” The proletarianization of male workers serves as a central theme in the development of their urban identities. However, Black women’s identity formation did not depend upon her entrance into the industrial work force. Historian Jacqueline Jones explains that motherhood rather than job status continued to serve as working-class women’s primary self-identifier. Historian Sharon Harley’s theory concerning Black women’s working-class consciousness supports Jones’ assertion. Many of these women viewed their line of work as temporary, especially married women. More often than not, their self-sacrificing roles as mothers, wives, aunts, sisters, daughters, and race uplifters constructed their identities as opposed to their occupation.⁴⁶

Jacqueline Jones also accounts for the short-lived nature of industrial employment among Black women. They avoided expending energy for advancement within such positions. They recognized the futility of earnest ambition when rigid gender discrimination and racial segregation automatically prohibited promotion. Thus, in addition to the supremacy of their roles as nurturers and leaders, Black working women also understood the tenuous quality of their employment.⁴⁷

Although both gender discrimination and racial prejudice severely constricted their economic improvement, Black women consistently chose *available* industrial jobs over domestic service. Despite the unhealthy and hazardous conditions of their work environments, industry’s higher wages captured the interests of working Black women.

Those who fled the stigma and degradation of domestic service, however, “. . . paid a high price in terms of their general health and well-being.” A case in point is the experience of tobacco workers. This workplace lacked any satisfactory laboratories, ventilation, eating accommodations, and break areas. The air, usually laden with fumes and tobacco dust, induced chronic respiratory ailments. Prevented from talking to one another or sitting together, women kept rhythm to a mechanized beat to make their tasks more bearable. Work songs similar to those of their slave foremothers rang out in collective hope and protest. The harmony and melody of the years helped many derive a measure of satisfaction in an employment situation with virtually nonexistent avenues of self-fulfillment. Singing saved the spirit and will of these poorly paid, easily replaced, semi-skilled workers.⁴⁸

The oyster gatherers of the southeastern coastal areas stood at workbenches all day. The smell of oysters infused their hair, clothes, and bodies, a pervasive scent that lingered well after the season’s end. Coastal family structures also reflected absent female members. But the ocean proved a more reliable source of job security than any available in town life. After the hard work of the harvest season, female workers migrated to urban centers where “. . . the insatiable demand for domestic servants and laundresses assured them a makeshift existence.”⁴⁹ According to Jones, even ten year olds became financially independent of their parents and left home. Young women also left the security of their coastal communities. Some left as soon as they earned enough money to migrate. Others were sent to the city by their families.⁵⁰

The question remains, “Who was *Charlotte*?” Sociologist Carole Marks’ theoretical interpretation of migrant origins may help find her. Having forcibly and persuasively argued that migration participants were primarily nonrural, nonagricultural, skilled and unskilled

urban residents, Marks indicates increases in northern Black literacy rates as confirmation of migrants' prior, urban residence. Another indicator relates to the flow of migrants from southern rural to urban settings. Small population increases in southern cities coupled with the absence of change in relative proportions of the Black population suggest displacement of the migrating population. Thus, the secondary migration patterns of Black rural folk account for the somewhat stable urban Black population. Simply put, rural and quasi-literate people took the place of artisans and other skilled and semi-skilled Black workers as the latter quit the South. In turn, these Black people became city dwellers and acquired an urban background. Due to out-migration, the population turnover in southern cities and the simultaneous movement to northern cities constitutes the "continuous motion" characteristic of Black history.⁵¹

Building on Mark's theory I created a location technique which fills in the gaps of *Charlotte's* shadowy past. My location technique redresses the lack of documentation so that *Charlotte* becomes a part of the historical record. My running search for Hunter's Charlotte links possible choices she may have made. Hunter's Charlotte made her way North from Peachtree Street in Atlanta. She appears in a written record, i.e., Hunter's autobiography. Charlotte's story, however, must be "squeezed and teased" from her affiliation with the PWA. Tracing the footsteps of Hunter's Charlotte allows me to apply the experiences of other female migrants. The location technique employed redresses the lack of documentation and allows *Charlotte* to become a part of the historical record. Hunter's Charlotte did make her way North from the South. This location technique fills in the gaps. This location technique also appropriates the research, findings, and conclusions of migration specialists.

In this way, I have shown that *Charlotte* was among the young, single women from rural Mississippi who traveled to southern towns and cities looking for more money, work experience, and excitement. *Charlotte*, like Sara Brooks, took a job as an industrial domestic in a southern town. When she tired of her cleaning assignment, maybe she went as far southeast as a Georgia fishing village. When her seasonal employment ended, *Charlotte* migrated to the city. While in Atlanta *Charlotte* returned to the position which was always available.

Charlotte's roots were rural and agricultural. Domestic service and field labor characterized her childhood. Her familial obligations and subsequent work ethic supported her choices to seek and maintain employment on a regular basis. By working in various positions in southern towns and cities, she acquired status as an "urban resident" via secondary migration. Hunter's *Charlotte* arrived in Cleveland with a "forthrightness of manner" bred of an exposed urban laborer, former field hand, and seasoned migrant worker. All of which contributed to the dissemblance of an experienced domestic servant.⁵²

Working-Class Black Women, Labor Relations, and Migration, 1880-1930

Black women, as active participants in labor strikes, were neither nonexistent nor insignificant. The Washerwomen's Association of Atlanta strike of 1881 serves as an example of their experiences. Despite the support of three thousand laundresses and a host of cooks, servants, and child nurses, this two week disturbance of July 1881 did not yield "conclusive" results. The movement suffered from the arrests and fines of strike leaders. The protest eventually collapsed under the pressures exerted by Atlanta's white business sector.⁵³

White businessmen cooperatively dismantled the strike by undermining their service workers. They used private and public power to destroy the servants' political platform. Their coercive measures included mandatory business licenses for laundry services and landlords' threats to increase rents. They also damaged the washerwomen's economic agenda. Their laborers demanded wage increases. They refused to comply. Nevertheless Tera Hunter asserts that,

Whether or not some or all of the washerwomen were able to gain higher wages we may never know; however, they continued to maintain a modicum of independence in their labor not enjoyed by other domestics. The strike speaks volumes symbolically about African-American working class women's consciousness of their racial, class, and gender position.⁵⁴

Historian Tera Hunter also recounts subtle forms of resistance as labor victories. Living in their own homes with their families rather than with their employers equaled independence. Switching jobs frequently as their personal circumstances changed equaled power. Quitting equaled freedom. The successful rousing and organization of the laundresses affected other domestic workers including child nurses, cooks, and maids. As a result of the strike, these workers also demanded better wages.⁵⁵

In addition to their resistance to occupational domination, southern Black women sometimes strained the social fibers of city life. In the generation prior to migration, public segregation became the norm. The Wilson years brought the consolidation of Jim Crow.⁵⁶ Domestic service, however, persisted as an acceptable exception. The vast majority of southern, urban Black women remained laborers in the private sphere of society. Yet, historian Jacqueline Jones describes young Black girls who refused to abide by the "deference ritual." Some working-class Black women protested white male sexual harassment in their workplace. Labor relations for most of these women consisted of

informal (personal) politics and survival. Of which, dissemblance became the most reliable and safest form for resistance. As blacks, females, and unskilled workers they played no leading roles in the trade union dramas of the time.

Despite the fact that Black women had “always worked,” organized labor incentives were rare. Harley asserts that “it was difficult for [Black] women . . . to develop a working-class consciousness along the lines of a white male trade unionist while at the same time being denied membership in a white male-dominated union or, if granted membership, while being discriminated against.”⁵⁷ The irony of this reality must be reiterated. The denigrated occupation in which they were locked, i.e., the “despised calling” of domestic service, served as the vehicle by which Black women became the “bone and sinew of the race.”⁵⁸

Sociologist Carole C. Marks makes some powerful comments regarding Black women’s economic utility and migration despite their occupational constraints. Domestic service, primarily found within what Marks refers to as the “informal” sector of the economy, persisted to be work that was highly fluid or “elastic.” Hardly recognizable as productive and significant labor, Marks believes that the “curious history” of domestic explains “the invisibility of the work.” The problem centers on the depiction of domestic service “. . . as an extension of the ‘natural’ female role.”⁵⁹

Another problem in accessing the relation of Black women’s labor migration pertains to the tendency of migration experts to focus on male themes. Marks states that migration scholars rarely discuss the role played by women. Choosing to focus on labor agents, northern industries, and the recruitment of Black men, migration specialists rarely recognize the necessary and invaluable economic function of Black women. In so doing,

migration scholarship implies a relatively passive, secondary, and peripheral female role in the migration process.⁶⁰

Inextricably linked to the invisibility of overt labor relations, the economic significance of the Black domestics to the migration process seems just as imperceptible. Evaluating the centrality of Black women's productive labor migration, Marks finds three major roles of Black women's economic utility. The first aspect depended on their marital status. If married, Black women maintained and sustained their families during the initial separation from the male, migrant worker. As single women or heads of households, they often negotiated employment for themselves and possibly other family members as well. Secondly, Black women contributed to the transportation expenses of their migrating family. Immediately upon arrival in the North, Black women performed the longest phase on their economic function, i.e., supporting themselves or supplementing the low wages of the male migrant.⁶¹

Marks makes it clear that Black women's work, i.e., domestic service, facilitated many aspects of the migration process. Black women kept the children of migrants, shared the contents of a service pan, borrowed from the employer's pantry, and wrote letters to the North. These actions account for just a few of the "invisible" ways Black women participated in the Great Migration.⁶²

Some women, however, took more visible roles. The pull of war-industry jobs, family and friends, exciting city life, and more protection from white domination turned thousands of hearts and minds away from the South. In the end, many working-class Black women eventually tossed aside the nonrural economy of the New South as well as the fields

of their foremothers. Yet to discover that some old, worn, and familiar spaces, i.e., domestic service, would not be easily disregarded. Nonetheless, stepping into a stream of change, these working-class sisters joined the mass population shift to the North.⁶³

Chapter Three

“SHELTER IN THE TIME OF STORM”

A Northern Home for Southern Sisters: Jane Edna Hunter and the Phillis Wheatley Association

We’ve all of us been poor motherless children, and the Lord
is going to help us build a home for all the other poor
motherless daughters of our race.¹

Jane Edna Hunter
A Nickel and A Prayer (1940)

Home,—a magic word, the dearest place on earth to most
of us—a place where there are those who are interested in
you, individually . . .²

Bertha A. Fennell
“Phillis Wheatley Association.
‘Not an institution—home.’” (1929)

Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in.³

Robert Frost
“The Death of the Hired Man”

Migrant women from the South found the struggle of adjustment to their new surroundings somewhat lessened by the efforts of established, middle-class Black women.⁴ Housing deficiencies and discrimination, racism and sexism, prostitution and vice, crime, and lack of opportunity awaited *Charlotte*. But the work of these women made the transition from southern to northern life less traumatic.

These *seen dangers*, i.e., actual threats combined with *unseen dangers*, e.g., the lack of “homelike surrounding,” did not go unnoticed. Many northern, Black women responded to the needs of female migrants. Darlene Clark Hine, Adrienne Lash Jones, and Stephanie J. Shaw’s writings on the leadership of one woman in particular highlight a model of Black women’s middle-class consciousness. They chose Jane Edna Hunter, who came to Cleveland a stranger and later offered Charlotte what she had lacked in friendship, protection, and helpful guidance.⁵

JANE EDNA HUNTER

A child of South Carolinian sharecroppers, Jane Edna Harris began self-supporting employment in 1892 at age ten. The death of Jane’s father prompted the immediate placement of all four children into white households as domestic servants by their mother. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis and Jacqueline Jones confirm this pattern of early female employment. Jones cites a 1911 social worker’s report which showed that most Black women began self-sustaining work many years before adulthood and continued to work through their middle years. In fact, the report found that “even old age brought no reprieve from labor.” Quoting one of the twenty three migrants from her study Clark-Lewis reveals one migrant’s confession, “No girl I know *wasn’t* trained for work out by ten. You washed, watched and whipped somebody the day you stopped crawling. From the time a girl can stand, she’s being made to work.”⁶

Jane Hunter’s first job required cooking, cleaning, washing, and ironing for a family of six. Two younger children were also given to her care. This two year assignment introduced Jane to the harsh realities of household employment. Interrupted by her mother’s urgent request to come to Clemson, Jane gratefully took a train to the nearest town. From

there a three mile walk brought her to her ill mother's bedside. Jane Hunter recollected, "After caring for her and running the household for a year, I left for Charleston at the invitation of Aunt Anna to care for her little daughter Ersie."⁷

Jane retained this position for nine months and then traveled back to Clemson. Upon her return Jane accepted a job as a child-nurse. The next effort at paying her own way found her in a hotel patronized by white students and traveling salesmen. She worked as a waitress and chamber maid. This meant dodging sexual advances and ignoring sexual solicitations of white men. When Jane's aunt learned of this, she came a distance of four miles to tell her sister what a dangerous thing she had done in permitting her daughter to work in a boarding house. Jane accompanied her Aunt Caroline to her rural, South Carolina birthplace. Jane Hunter remembered, "Now that I was older and safe under the wings of the folk on the farm, I had a childlike sense of security." But she continued to work.⁸

The dairy business, grain growing and the raising of high grade cattle, stripping fodder, picking cotton, and cutting corn and wood, comprised her field work. When not in the field Jane helped with the laundry. Jane earned twenty-five cents singing Negro spirituals to an interested audience, joined a church, and shouted along with everyone else at local revivals in her free time. By 1896, after four year's of work experience, Jane earned enough money to buy a few clothes and a railroad ticket to Abbeville, South Carolina. At age fourteen, Jane entered the senior class of the high school connected with Ferguson and Williams College.⁹

Jane received both academic training and practical experience during her tenure at Ferguson and Williams College. She continued to work in order to provide her room and board. Washing dishes, clearing tables, serving meals, caring for the school cutlery, laundry,

and ironing helped Jane pay her way. After her first year Jane returned to her rural roots via the railroad. Jane received more responsibilities as she matriculated. The fruit of her labor came with commencement. This culmination of hard work and dedication was made even more memorable with a statement made by the college president. Jane recorded, “. . . the President delivered an address and in it spoke of Jane, the little ‘pickaninny’ he had brought from Pendleton four years ago and how pleased he was with the fine dependable woman she had grown to be. My heart almost burst with pride.”¹⁰

That happy feeling did not last very long. Upon her return to Aunt Caroline’s home she became restless and depressed. Having grown to appreciate the “decencies and amenities of existence, [Jane] found the old ways insufferable, and felt a strong, if unguided, desire to better [her] lot. Aunt Caroline’s home, . . . was filled to overflowing with other homeless children.” In the summer of 1901, Jane migrated to Florida.¹¹

Jane Hunter’s impatience and dissatisfaction testified on her exposure and experiences. The effect of migration made her intolerant of past home conditions. Sara Brooks spoke of a similar experience. Brooks’ labor migrations to a southern town, then a southern city, and finally an urban center prompted some commentary regarding the old ways. “I don’t know how we survived, but it didn’t seem bad then. You see, everybody was livin in that way when we were down there and nobody didn’t think anything about it because that’s all we knew. We didn’t know no other place”¹² Jane Hunter had known another place and Aunt Caroline’s home no longer could be hers.

Florida, however, presented no permanent resting place. Planning to live with her uncle and work in the boarding house which he managed, Jane eventually requested a trip back home. Soon after her return Jane married a man forty years her senior at the counsel of

her mother. Jane Edna Harris Hunter recalled

[Edward Hunter] was kind and fatherly, but I could not be happy in such a union. I am sure that it was wrong to live in wedlock without mutual affection. After some fifteen months of mental anguish, I decided to leave. He was only too glad, for economic reasons to acquiesce in my proposal to go to Charleston to work for a few months. A great weight rolled from my mind as I left him, determined to find and keep the freedom which I so ardently desired.¹³

The loveless union suggested by Hunter's mother may have been a mode of escape from the world of work. Hunter's mother had placed all of her children into domestic service immediately after the death of her husband. Maybe a life of domestic servitude and subsequent sexual vulnerability, caused her to consider arranging a more secure future for her daughter. Yet, the marriage failed and Jane Hunter continued to support herself. Like many young, Black working-class women, another move, another job, and another search led Jane to a Southern city. Charleston, South Carolina provided the place where Hunter's education, occupation, and training would conform with the histories of most professional Black women of her time.

At her next wage earning job, Jane worked as a nursemaid for three children. This family paid well enough for Jane to help with her two sisters' education at Ferguson and Williams College. Responding to a suggestion by "an influential Negro woman," Jane entered the Cannon Street Hospital and Training School for Nurses. Nurse Hunter admitted, "The consciousness of greater success and new power in my profession made me happy." Although she received much recognition for her nursing services, traveling frequently between Charleston and Summerville, South Carolina at the request of both white and Black patients Nurse Hunter saw the need for further training. With this conviction she entered Dixie Hospital and Training School for Nurses at Hampton Institute. Nurse Hunter's career as a source of livelihood and pride grew immensely while at Dixie. As

providence would have it, however, the petty jealousy of the head nurse resulted in Hunter's dismissal from the school. Hunter resolved, "... but with undaunted courage and full confidence in myself, I turned my thoughts toward Florida where I intended to practice my profession." Hunter's decision to migrate to Florida was divinely altered. Stopping to visit with the Colemans of Richmond, Virginia, her family's friends persuaded Jane to migrate to Cleveland.¹⁴

In contrast to Hunter's serendipitous decision to make Cleveland her home, Brooks chose Cleveland because of familial connection. Brooks left her family's farm and went to stay with her brother in the southern town of Bainbridge. Although her brother worked in the local sawmill, he decided to better his family's situation by migrating to Cleveland. He later sent for his wife and children. Brooks stayed in a furnished rent house which they vacated. After attempting to remain on her own, Brooks went back home. While at the farm, her sister convinced her to come along to Mobile, Alabama. Brooks consented and migrated to Mobile. She eventually relocated to Cleveland at the suggestion of her brother. He wrote and told her to come to Cleveland. In the letter he said, "Why don't you come up here? You could make more here." Thus, Brooks' decision to migrate North rested on a familial recommendation and personal aspiration. Brooks arrived in Cleveland, Ohio in 1940.¹⁵

Thirty five years earlier a train had deposited Hunter in the same city. Despite a severe storm near Delaware, Ohio, the train to Cleveland on May 10, 1905 delivered Jane Hunter to this urban center. The rain, hail, and high wind delayed the locomotive, but did not dispel the sense of excitement and anxiety of twenty-two year old Hunter. Jane wrote, "When the storm ceased, it was good to find a hopeful sign in the blue skies ahead." With

\$1.75 in her pocket and pride in her spirit Jane declined an invitation to lodge with her traveling companions. Years later, Jane would recall her search for lodging and recount the hopelessness of, “. . . the Negro girl, who friendless and alone, looks for a decent place to live in Cleveland.” Because of her issues surrounding housing Hunter conceived of a social agency which would become “home” to migrant women—a shelter in the time of storm.

On November 11, 1911, just six years after her arrival, Hunter called a meeting of a group of young, domestic workers whom she had met while nursing in private white homes. Her status as a professional women did not preclude her vulnerability as a female migrant without the protection of family, money, and whiteness. Being poor, Black, and single meant that despite her employability Hunter needed the protection from exploitation because of her circumstance. Hunter’s training as a nurse and experiences as a service worker put her in contact with women of similar standards and concerns. Thus, the doors of the Phillis Wheatley Association (PWA) stood open for Hunter’s Charlotte in the 1920s. The nickels and prayers of domestic workers underwrote their refuge.¹⁶

Service and Philanthropy of Middle-class Black Women

Hunter’s philanthropic mission mirrored the visions of other race women. The philanthropic endeavors and volunteer service of middle-class Black women sheltered the homeless, enlightened the confused, protected the vulnerable, and trained the unskilled mass of female migrants. For example, the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (1896), the leadership of the National Training School for Women and Girls of Washington, D.C. (1909), and the National Association of Wage Earners of New York (1920s) all reflected Hunter’s interest in and dedication to “the great army of women and girls . . . who are away from home and need home protection and social guidance.”¹⁷

The “race work” of these women also transcended the social conditions of migrant women and families. Race work included institution building. In this line of unpaid public work women such as Maggie Lena Walker flourished. Brown, Shaw, and Harley’s articles on bank president Maggie Lena Walker demonstrate that she was a “true race woman.” The daughter of a Virginia laundress, Walker served her community by heading the Independent Order of St. Luke, a beneficial society established in 1867. Under Walker’s leadership the Order grew financially and structurally. Walker eventually established a community bank which inspired individual Black women to improve their living conditions by their own thrift, industry, and abilities.¹⁸

Schools, however, seemed to be the most immediate and accessible institutions for helping the race. Historian Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham refers to the practicality of school president Nannie Helen Burroughs, a granddaughter and daughter of former slaves. Shaw wrote of the sacrifice and savvy of Hampton-bred Janie Porter Barrett. Mary McLeod Bethune’s work in education and race relations inspired many of them. The work of all these women centered on their faith in the power of teaching.¹⁹

Harley adds the impact of the entrepreneurial genius Madame C. J. Walker to the list of “true race women.” According to Hine, this self-starter from the Louisiana cotton fields, “deserves a special place in the annals of Black women’s history.” Race women like Madame formed the group from which Hunter drew her inspiration and identity. These women personified the NACW’s motto, “Lifting as we climb.”²⁰

The scholarship of Black women historians documents the connection or community these women maintained throughout their professional and personal lives. Thoroughly suggestive of the depth and beauty found in the work of professional Black

women, historian Stephanie J. Shaw expends much time analyzing the collective consciousness of these women. Reared with an understanding of their debt and duty to their people, Black professional women workers juggled labor, family, and community service. Always working, these women used nursing, education, library science, and social work as mechanisms for social change, institution building, and community development. Their paid and unpaid work contributed to the protection of female migrants.²¹

These women took racial solidarity as a personal, non-negotiable lifestyle. Their service on behalf of other working women was often blind to economic, social, physical, and educational prejudices.²² Another consistency among these women concerned their class origins. Hunter's working-poor background mirrored the humble beginnings of most middle-class Black women of that era. Harley also discloses facts surrounding the cultural values of middle-class women. Often raised in poverty, the self-perceptions and attitudes of this group of women closely resembled those of "ordinary Black folk."²³ Therefore, determining class dynamics among professional Black women requires attention to factors beyond their adult economic situations.

The difference between middle-class women and the upper-middle-class social elite concerned family background. Hunter's humble roots were typical of middle-class women. The prestige of Black women in this strata reflected the consequences of their education, training, and occupation. In contrast, the women and men of historian Willard Gatewood's study, inherited much of their economic success and positions from the "old aristocracy." Both Harley and Gatewood address the lack of diversity along the color line among the Black elite.²⁴

Harley and Shaw contend that belonging to the middle class signified a call to duty more than a status symbol. Harley says plainly that “incomes were often too low, job security too elusive, and racial discrimination too widespread for most middle-class Black women to boast of being anything other than servants of their people.”²⁵ Thus, their education and relative means obligated them to assume responsible roles within the Black community. By far, the origins of the middle-class matched more closely the realities of the working-poor. The service Hunter provided for Charlotte, i.e., a home, matched her own need for shelter twenty years earlier. Hunter and the professional women of Shaw’s study *worked* at both paid and unpaid jobs in order to provide some security for themselves and others. Migration brought forth even more determined measures of community service. At times, their success in service overshadowed their previous struggles. And sometimes their success in service grew along side their continual struggles.²⁶ Hine explains that with the turn of the century these urban Black women became more professional in the assistance they provided young Black women. In addition to citing the numerous organizations and clubs through which they labored, Hine contends that their work in sacrificial service was notably different from the philanthropy of wealthy, liberal whites during that era. The “nickels” of the working-class, the cash on hand of the middle-class, and the pecuniary generosity of the color struck, upper-middle-class supported institutions such as the Phillis Wheatley Association. Yet, these funds were a far cry from the miraculous amounts donated to Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, by Rockefeller. Hine explains that Black philanthropy expressed itself in the form of small-scale charitable giving, personal assistance and community involvement. In most cases, Black women contributed to the well-being of individuals, families, and groups with whom they had relationships. Shaw

says that this type of unpaid work should not be regarded as mere charity, but, rather community involvement. Hine agrees that for Black women volunteer service remained of primary importance and preference to “simply making financial donations to worthy causes.”²⁷ In short, Shaw, Hine, and Harley suggest a very personal connection of race women like Jane Edna Harris Hunter and the “young, unsophisticated, and unattached” Black women of the migrant population in need of “home.”²⁸

CLEVELAND, OHIO, AND OTHER URBAN CENTERS, 1915-1930

The physical world which surrounded Charlotte upon her arrival in Cleveland is the third phase of her migration portrait, i.e., the destination. In an article entitled, “The Greatest Un-Met Social Need Among Colored Women,” Hunter described the typical female migrant, a description which fits Charlotte’s patchy history. Hunter relayed,

They step off the trains in strange cities and among total strangers, with nowhere to go and nothing to do. Is there any wonder that thousands of them go astray, and are lost every year? Physically and morally, because there was no open door and ‘Home’ to receive them.²⁹

Hunter’s autobiography documents Charlotte’s case in of a chapter entitled, “Types of Girls Given a Chance.” Hunter believed that some migrants from the deep South were “amazingly backward,” a condition bred by tradition. Thus, she reasoned that their reactions were conditioned by feelings of inferiority. For example, she saw Charlotte’s reluctance to take her theft case to court as a consequence of her inferiority complex. In Hunter’s words, “To these defenseless souls, the Phillis Wheatley owes protection and love . . .”³⁰ But, to fully understand what Hunter protected Charlotte *from* invites a look into the world which Charlotte found upon her arrival. Kenneth L. Kusmer’s local history of Cleveland provides the background which is needed.

The face of the Western Reserve—Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, and surrounding counties—steadily matured throughout the mid 1800s. The 1832 completion of the Ohio and Erie Canal as well as the completion of the first railroad linkages to New York City created the “Forest City.” Consequently, Cleveland achieved commercial dominance of northern Ohio and the city’s small Black residence shared in that growth.³¹

The demographic characteristics of the small but growing Black population in nineteenth century Cleveland suggests a visible Black community. By 1880, 68.4 percent of all Black households (primarily headed by males) in Cuyahoga County contained four or fewer persons. With fewer children and a higher ratio of males to females, these families may have seemed a less permanent marker of change. Gender analysis notes that the presence of women implies rootedness due to childbearing. In short, the structure of Cleveland’s first Black families did not suggest the fixity associated with settler families.³²

In nineteenth century Cleveland, a significant number of Blacks worked in unskilled labor and domestic service. In 1870, sixty-two percent of all employed Black women in Cleveland performed some aspect of personal or domestic service. Yet, at this point in history Black women’s restricted labor reflected a gender discrimination versus racial inequality. Lower female occupational status constituted the job experience of most working women in Cleveland including whites and immigrants although Black women tended to be employed more frequently than white women. Kusmer states that the stability of male headed households along with greater opportunities for male workers depressed female employment. As a result, Black women claimed less than a fifth of the Black work force in 1870. Materially, the Black community benefited from integrated schools, a few propertied and influential leaders, and “an aura of middle-class respectability.”³³

Before the Civil War, the East Side served as the center of Cleveland's Black population. This concentration of people formed a community which suffered relatively low levels of racial prejudice. They also enjoyed unusual economic opportunities. These two conditions permitted a somewhat militant protest to the racial inequality found elsewhere in the United States. Expressed most, for example, notably in Black Cleveland's denunciation of the Fugitive Slave Law. The readiness with which they fought for inclusion in the Civil War effort also attested to their political consciousness.

The majority of Black Cleveland's leadership relied on an integrationist approach to race matters. As a result, the repatriation efforts of groups such as the American Colonization Society met with resentment and resistance in Black Cleveland. Black emigrationists faced the same obstinacy. Black Clevelanders, from their protest of the Fugitive Slave Laws to their insistence to be counted as Union supporters, constructed a community without the separatism which defined Black life in most cities throughout the North.³⁴

Nineteenth century Cleveland had no schools exclusively for Blacks. There was no long lasting, regularly published Black newspaper until 1883. In addition to such enigma, the churches of this community differed from the multi-purpose institutions of Black communities in other Northern cities. The separate institutions which characterized, created and constructed other Black communities did not exercise the same power in nineteenth century Black Cleveland. In short, the reality of access to most public accommodations, the existence of integrated schools and churches, and the economic results of a growing commercial town provided early Black Clevelanders with a significant degree of racial equality.³⁵

Kusmer marks the years 1870-1915 as Black Cleveland's transition from a comparatively comfortable small community to the beginnings of an urban ghetto. He identifies this period between the Civil War and First World War as the formative years of the black ghetto. Citing population increase and the growth in racial hostility associated with the increase, Kusmer explains the eclipse of Black Cleveland's atypical racial equality. Other shifts in the patterns of urban life included Black occupational and economic decline as well as heightened social differentiation. Cleveland's Black community and subsequent leadership, politics, and institutions witnessed the growth of racial segregation and hostility.³⁶

The expectations of the community corresponded with its leadership. Before 1900, Black Cleveland's conservative, integrationist leadership went unchallenged. The militancy of their ante-bellum days behind them, the status quo among the "old elite" (those whom Gatewood refers to as the "aristocrats of color") called for an appreciative acceptance of Cleveland's relatively quiet racial temper. Thereby, protecting their privileged positions. With the turn of the century, however, new groups formed within the community. Self-made businessmen and politicians outside the old aristocracy introduced other methods of leadership. These leaders promulgated a "self-help ethic." (Shaw refers to this philosophy among female race leaders of this time. She places their activities and organizations on a continuum of the self-help tradition, i.e., the history of voluntary associations.)³⁷

Unlike the old elite, the emerging middle-class, race leaders owed much of their success to Black patronage. Lodges, social clubs, and non-religious institutions such as the Cleveland Home for the Aged Colored People (1896) testify of this group's conscientious efforts to establish viable options for Blacks. For example, this new group of leaders

provided of recreational release for the members of their class as well as subsistence relief for less fortunate Blacks. The subject of this chapter, Jane Edna Hunter, arrived in Cleveland amidst this transition from the conservative, integrationist approach of the old elite and the socially responsible, self-help doctrine of the rising middle-class.³⁸

However, Hunter's strategies for building and maintaining the Phillis Wheatley Home reflected aspects of both the leadership styles. Conservative integration characterized her approach while securing funding sources. While the new found voice of the socially responsible professional served as the foundation's philosophy. Hunter's choice to accept white patronage to fund the PWA assured a sound financial base for the organization. At the same time, this decision angered the new elite or socially responsible professionals. They resented Hunter for devising a way to benefit from a respectable dependence upon the white community. Although she maintained social distance, Hunter built a self-help organization by extracting needed financial assistance from whites.³⁹

Hunter's Phillis Wheatley Home developed at a time when Cleveland's Black institutions flourished. The change in leadership, race philosophy, and the migration combined to introduce new and revive old institutions. The growth of Cleveland's Black churches presents an interesting case in point. While the new elite owed its growth and success to the patronage of working-class and working-poor Blacks, the increase in church membership spoke to another but related trend. The growth of Black churches in Cleveland had less to do with racial solidarity and more to do with intra-race, class dynamics. Kusmer explains that for most Black Clevelanders, church membership signified status. Conversely, in other urban centers, belonging to a church may have provided assistance and protection. This institution within Cleveland indicated how much prestige and influence belonged to

the congregation. The presence of migrants, the rank and file, and average Black folk clashed with the religiosity of the well-to-do, urban elite. The highly emotional, sensual, and rhythmic worship preferred by the newcomers insulted the gentility of the aristocracy. The Black upper class required more refined services. Thus, the expansion of Black religious life had little to do with the need of Black Clevelanders for a separate place of worship due to racial hostility, isolation, and socio-economic dependency. Cleveland's roster of Black churches grew because the sensationalized preaching, responsive shouting, and overall soul-stirring vibes of the migrant southerners forced a change in Black religious life.⁴⁰

Kusmer's figures for Cleveland's Black population during the migration years show that prior to 1916 the annual number of migrants was small compared to other urban centers. But during and after the war the Forest City became one of the primary destinations of southern Blacks. By March 1919, however, the wave of migrants temporarily decreased. Migration resumed after 1920 and during this decade Cleveland's Black population doubled. Kusmer states that the twenties—especially the first half of the decade—reflected a continuation of Black folks crisis or “push” from the South. The influx of migrants between the period of 1920 and 1930 “was still so large that the assimilation of newcomers into the urban setting remained a continuing problem.”⁴¹

When Charlotte stepped off the train in 1920s Cleveland she probably had no idea of the socio-economic, cultural, and political transitions which the Forest City's Black community had undergone. She had no understanding of the philosophical debates surrounding her forthcoming shelter or “home.” One of the thousands of female migrants coming to Cleveland during the Great Migration, Charlotte's needs had little to do with

ideological battles regarding the concept of Black community. Charlotte's immediate needs had more to do with subsistence and survival. Therefore, Jane Edna Hunter's battles with Cleveland's Black leaders regarding the establishment of an all Black institution proved to be an insightful and timely struggle. Hunter's response facilitated the coming human tide. Kusmer credits Hunter's organizational brilliance. "Among race institutions established before the war," declares Kusmer, "the Phillis Wheatley Association responded most quickly to the crisis of the Great Migration."⁴² Hunter's foresight regarding the needs of newly arrived Black girls and women protected hundreds of Black females from the safety crises created by housing shortages, discrimination, poverty, and economic vulnerability.

Demographics of the city's Black population affected Charlotte's experiences despite her oblivion of them. Migration affected housing, vice, and crime. As a result, the circumstances of other female migrants in other urban centers coincide with those of Charlotte. Socially responsible professionals responded to the needs of their race in similar ways throughout the northern United States. In short, the *seen and unseen dangers* of urban life and the protective measures designed by Black women constitute another dimension of black urban history.

By 1920, almost forty percent of the northern Black population was concentrated in eight urban centers. Of these, Cleveland experienced the second most dramatic increase. An estimated 307.8% gain placed Cleveland behind only Detroit in this Black population growth between 1910 and 1920. Thus, it is more than probable that Charlotte's 1920s arrival was not entirely a coincidence.

With this massive increase in a relatively short period of time came severe housing shortages. Housing deficiencies exaggerated racial segregation. That is to say, Cleveland

was unprepared to accommodate their newly arrived Black citizens within the parameters of their established Black communities.⁴³

An analysis of 1910 census tract data reveals that the majority of Cleveland's 155 tracts contained some Black residents. Yet, even in the most heavily Black areas no more than 25% of that particular community was all Black. The growing areas of Blacks' highest concentration were shared with an ever-increasing immigrant population. Often times migrant lodging lacked sanitary necessities such as indoor plumbing, human waste removal, and kitchen facilities. Housing in these areas was often dilapidated and uninhabitable. Sociologist Carole Marks details these conditions and traces the cause to migration.

Marks notes that throughout American history, all migrant groups faced problems of low wages, poor conditions, and high cost of living in core or urban areas. The distinguishing factor of Black migration pertains to whites violent reactions to their *fellow* Americans. Before the Great Migration, northern Blacks resided throughout urban centers with few discernible patterns of segregation. But as their numbers increased a panic developed. White response to the change encouraged real estate interests and property owner's associations to lead an campaign of fear against these American migrants. Myths of inferiority, property value decline, and rapid neighborhood turnover resulted in Blacks being charged higher rents than whites, often for the same accommodations.⁴⁴

Landlords took advantage of needy and desperate migrants by overcharging them for inadequate accommodations. Landlords capitalized on one seedy practice in particular—the unethical and unscrupulous tactic of leasing divided larger units, without alteration and no decrease in rent. Of course, this resulted in an unhealthy and dangerous overcrowding in many Black communities. Cleveland's Central and Scovill sectors were crowded and over

used. In Cleveland, “. . . the population density of the Black district was thirty-five to forty persons per acre, contrasted with a citywide density of twenty-two.”⁴⁵

Marks shows that the combination of poverty, segregation, and overcrowding adversely affected Black mortality, morbidity, and crime rates. Black death rates were consistently higher than white death rates. The discriminatory hospital treatment they received exacerbated this problem. The prevalence of venereal diseases, tuberculosis and pneumonia spoke volumes about Black migrant lifestyles. Blacks were arrested for minor offenses and the slightest infractions. Petty gambling, drunkenness, and disorderly conduct set many behind bars. Many cases were dismissed, suggesting the degree of suspicion and paranoia of white authority.⁴⁶

Of particular concern to Jane Edna Hunter and other middle-class Black women activists was the “moral degradation . . . [of] naive, impoverished, Black country women who, like Hunter, had migrated to Northern cities in search of better lives.” The social ill of prostitution was a sworn enemy of these race uplift workers. The unseen sexual danger of being an unattached, poor, and subsequently vulnerable Black woman in an urban city was the “powerful push towards prostitution.” The seen dangers of racism, very few employment alternatives, insufficient food, poor housing, and gender discrimination were precursors to women’s desperate decision to participate in the wholesale organized traffic in Black flesh.⁴⁷

In her struggle to eradicate threatening forces to Black womanhood, Hunter dedicated an entire chapter of her autobiography to a discussion of fighting prostitution. Hunter unwittingly introduced herself to the trappings of the sex trades upon her arrival to Cleveland in 1905. Prior to her arrival in Cleveland, Hunter’s naiveté made her

oblivious to the business side of prostitution. The first place she lived turned out to be whore house. Hunter's economic and sexual vulnerability, lack of connections, and need of housing combined to lure her into an establishment which exploited female migrants facing such obstacles.⁴⁸

Years later, Hunter faced similar deception. While managing the Phillis Wheatley, a sly, educated, mulatto woman with pleasant manners attempted to hoodwink Hunter. Working for the "master of the underworld," a man known as Starlight, Dora was a scout for his prostitution rings. Dora interested herself in the work of the Association as a matter of expanding her business contacts. Dora successfully enticed one of Hunter's most attractive girls. Although Hunter kept a vigilant guard of her charges, the "ignorant, foolish, and weak" among her tenants nonetheless succumbed to enticement. But Hunter, convinced that "... these had to be protected as well," often accompanied a discreet policeman to places of assignation, rescued the girl, and assisted in the arrest of her would-be seducer.⁴⁹

A comparison with Black prostitution can be found in the work of Ruth Rosen on the history of prostitution among immigrant women. Rosen introduces and discusses the issue of prostitution as one of the aspects of the American reform during the Progressive Era. Shaw maintains that addressing attacks on Black female morality was a part of Black women's reform agenda long before the Progressive Era. The distinction between Rosen's reformers and Shaw's Black club women has to do with initiative. Shaw states that there is no need to defend Black club women against charges of imitating white women activists and reformers. Nor did Black women's initiatives center on compensating for exclusion

from white organizations. Black women's tradition of mutual association or self-help predates the strivings of white female reformers by many years.⁵⁰

Hunter's fight against sexual exploitation due to poverty was unlike other female reformers of the time. White women and men responded to a discreet, isolated crisis which resulted in a moralizing mission. For Black women, the answers to prostitution in urban centers comprised another phase on the continuum of Black self-help. Hunter and other Black club women needed to save vulnerable, Black female migrants from "... the wholesale organized traffic in Black flesh."⁵¹

The historically challenged sexual integrity of Black womanhood remained intimately linked to the reality of Black prostitutes. Historian Deborah Gray White goes as far to suggest that personal aspects of Black women's lives have always been guarded and defensively defined. Although White's assertion pertains to Black women's reluctance to donate their private papers as archival sources, her observation stands as a reminder of Black women's response to battles with moral perceptions. White's observation speaks to Hunter's concern for Black female migrants. Black women, according to White, had a "... perennial concern with image, a justifiable concern born of centuries of vilification."⁵²

Feminist scholar Hazel V. Carby presents other ways to access and assess the "inner lives" of Black women. Despite the scarcity of manuscript collections, Carby relies documents the private lives of Black women. According to Carby, the fiction of female Harlem Renaissance writers and the music of female migrants, i.e., the blues, confront "... the dominant white cultural definitions of her sexuality; ideologies that define Black female sexuality as primitive and exotic." But, Carby spends most of her time developing her thesis. Her article establishes that women's blues presents a discourse of sexual politics

within the Black community. Carby's discussion also allows us to see how the social conditions of Black women were shaped by migration.⁵³

The question regarding experiences of female migrants in other urban centers invites a comparative look at Detroit during the migration years. A native Detroiter, Richard Thomas' case study, *Life For Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945*, handles the theme of migration within a well supported, organic construct. He calls his approach the community building process of African American urban history.⁵⁴

In his chapter "Weathering the Storm" Thomas lists the problems for Blacks in industrializing Detroit. Not surprisingly, substandard housing is the first item. The housing problem, however, receives two separate treatments. Thomas discusses the struggles for decent housing in the migrant community (working-class Blacks). He then turns to the strivings for relocation among middle and upper-middle class Blacks. The business and professional classes sought deliverance from the overcrowded, crime ridden, low property value sections to which they were racially versus economically confined.

Thomas considers the housing problem the number one obstacle to the community building process. Blacks in industrializing Detroit were restricted primarily to the downtown property and subdivisions. The former had notoriously high rents. The latter, although seemingly complimentary to migrants' rural environment, had a poor quality water supply as well as inadequate sewer disposal. High rents forced Blacks to adopt coping strategies. Taking in lodgers or boarders saved many families from destitution, but the presence of strangers and the strain of extra inhabitants took its toll on Black family structure.⁵⁵ What were other *seen and unseen dangers* of Detroit urban life? Relying on the

well documented, intercessory arm of the 1911 National Urban League's Detroit branch, Thomas presents their findings.

The Detroit Urban League sadly noted that crime among Blacks increased with every migration wave from the South. This observation skewed the fact that the majority of southern migrants were hard working people looking for higher wages and freedom from stringent racial codes. There were those, mostly from the urban South, who came to Detroit to make "easy money." They did not realize what Sara Brooks soon discovered, i.e., the "hardest and heaviest" industrial jobs constituted their opportunity.⁶⁶

Local papers sensationalized violence in the Black community. Riots and other explosions of racial tension swept through many Black communities. Gambling, in particular "number playing," permeated even the Christian element of the Black population. In short most of the vice and violence within the Black community between 1917 and 1945, was rooted in poverty, despair, and institutional racism. According to Thomas, the disparity between Black arrest and conviction records confirm this assertion. While Thomas does not exonerate Black offenders, he does, however, question the patterns of white police who used arrest as a form of social control.⁶⁷

The last comparative question to be addressed involves the redress among middle-class, Black women. Thomas' gender dimension takes place within the core institution of the Black community. It is in the Black church that we find the labor and sacrifice of working-class as well as middle-class Black women.

Focusing on two congregations in particular, Second Baptist Church and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), Thomas tells of institutional self-help activities. Between 1917 and 1918 one Baptist church in particular served as a major social

service center for migrants to Detroit. The Second Baptist church assisted southern Black migrants in some form well into the 1930s. Most notably, in 1924, the church established a Big Sister's Auxiliary to build a home for homeless Black girls. By 1933, Second Baptist church had raised and spent over half a million dollars on service to Detroit's Black community. However, much of their work on behalf of the migrants was later absorbed by the Detroit Urban League.⁵⁸

Although somewhat more conservative than the Baptist denomination, the more well-to-do members of the Methodist congregation also contributed to alleviating the problems of migrant women and girls. In 1898 The Association of Colored Women's Clubs of Michigan held its first meeting at Bethel AME. The Association of Colored Women met in the church again in 1913. Doubtless on the agenda of club women at this time were the issues of housing, sexual exploitation, and training of migrant women and girls.⁵⁹

By the late 1930s and early 1940s, both Second Baptist and Bethel AME had set up credit unions "... to eliminate the cut-throat activities of Black and white loan sharks who exploited Black workers." The Fannie B. Peck Credit Union of Bethel AME was not the only ingenious, socially conscious project of this pastor's wife. The Great Depression of 1930s showed that this Detroit housewife "... looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness."⁶⁰

On June 10, 1930, Mrs. Peck and fifty Black women decided to make history. Realizing their economic power as purchasers of household as well as personal goods and services, Black housewives of Detroit rallied support for Black businesses and professionals. Committing to support their own establishments was a display of economic nationalism. The Housewives League of Detroit (HWLD) was an organization of insightful

Black women on a mission. Publicly declaring their principles, the HWLD explained their purpose and relationship to other Black organizations:

We emphasize and declare it to be the most desirable to own our own business and manage it ourselves. While we recognize as an act of fairness the employment of Negroes in businesses owned and operated by other racial groups, yet we feel the solution of our economic problem is the ownership [of] business, and to this end we shall confine our efforts.⁶¹

In summary, the community building activities of Black women in Detroit are a significant piece of Thomas' conceptual framework for analyzing the Black urban experience. It is also a viable and valuable reference for a comparative re-construction of Black women's roles in the Great Migration.

Opportunity and Training for Black Women's Work

Hunter's life prior to founding the Phillis Wheatley Association was characterized by three intersecting factors—migration, domestic employment, and safety concerns. Hunter's Charlotte faced similar challenges as did the *Charlottes* for whom Hunter and Peck labored. A deeper look into the opportunity and training for Black women's work in the North elucidates these connections.

The safest and most expedient route North was a direct one. Hine notes that the solitary female traveler would be at a greater physical risk than the male migrant.

After all, a man could and did, with less approbation and threat of bodily harm, spend nights outdoors. More important, men were better suited to defend themselves against attackers. However, given the low esteem in which the general society held Black women, even the courts and law officials would have ridiculed and dismissed assault complaints from a Black female traveling alone, regardless of her social status. Yes, it was wise to make the trip all at once, and better still to have company.⁶²

Although Black men enjoyed greater autonomy and subsequent freedom of movement, teenage Black females who worked as nonagricultural wage earners were also very mobile. When their labor was not needed on the family farm, employment in a southern city exposed them to a different world. A short-range but steady flow away from cotton fields and kin folks made seasonal movement a way of life for many rural females. Thus, for some Black women the trip North involved secondary migration. This migration pattern encompassed “a series of moves that slowly expanded the migrants’ contacts with industrial society.”⁶³ In a southern urban setting they experienced jobs not unlike the ones they would find up North. For many Black women, domestic service was that constant. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis’ article, “Domestic Workers in the North,” gives an overview of their tasks.

Clark-Lewis mentions the safety measures taken by the families of female migrants. “The [southern] family’s culturally sustaining processes . . . timed and directed the migration of its young women. Their journey north was the result of extensive family deliberation. By the time young women left home, the family had usually gone to great lengths to prepare and protect them.” In the North these young women took service positions vacated by white women lucky enough to acquire factory work. Often residing with kin who helped in the adjustment to urban life, these women relied on familial support in securing employment. In overwhelming numbers, this meant domestic service.⁶⁴

Many white employer’s required the wearing of uniforms. Unlike southern employment, Black domestics in the North adorned themselves for subservience. Black women also discovered that the “day work” of the South was a privilege. Live-in systems predominated in the North. A domestic worker, isolated from her communities for extended

periods of time, coveted the day when her savings could maintain herself, help her rural kin, and make “day work” a realistic possibility. The options within domestic service were few but quite desirable. The laundress acted “as an informal employment agent.” An ideal position for the Black women seeking autonomy, a laundress contracted her own employment. Identifying white households in need of her services saved her from live-in status. The household day worker also retained certain rights. Live-out domestic servants worked fixed hours, set her own priorities for household duties, and avoided isolation from the Black community.⁶⁵

Over time, however, live-in systems persisted along side the more popular arrangement of day work. By 1925 the majority of domestics did not live in white household. The work done for a single family during the course of a week ended with a return home each night. Whether she worked for several families over the course of a week or one family, the day worker “quickly shed her uniform.” She carried her work clothes in a “freedom bag.” Clark-Lewis explains this act of resistance by observing that “. . . wearing her own clothes to and from work to show that she was her own person and that her life was a series of personal choices rather than predetermined imperatives.”⁶⁶

There is some scholarly opinion regarding remuneration. Clark-Lewis believes domestics in the North averaged \$5.00 per week while their rural southern counterparts cleared \$1.00 per week. Florette Henri’s figures generously attribute somewhere between \$1.50 and \$3.00 per week for urban domestics in the South, while migration brought her \$2.50 a day for domestic work.⁶⁷

Jones states that employment opportunities determined the demographic patterns of migration. For example, men led the way north to Detroit in response to jobs in the

automobile industry. While Chicago offered a more diversified female occupational structure, i.e., work *outside of* domestic service,⁶⁸ yet most clerical and sales available to women were invariably far more accessible to white women. Relatively few Black women got teaching positions, another acceptable form of female employment. Boardinghouse keepers, trained nurses, and waitresses also comprised categorical Black female employment. A minuscule number of Black women were self-employed hairdressers and manicurists. Other jobs in beauty culture came in the form of independent sales agent for Madam C. J. Walker. Black women looking for alternative to domestic service found the most jobs in the manufacturing and mechanical sectors of northern industry. However, since these positions were “. . . the least desirable jobs at the worst pay, with practically no chance of advancement, many [Black women], therefore, resorted to domestic work, and some to prostitution.”⁶⁹

Hunter's fears of such desperate choices strengthened her for the trials of making a “home” for such women. Hunter attempted to secure other Black women's economic stability in her efforts to affiliate the PWA with the NACW through the Ohio Federation. The NACW officers included some of the most influential Black women in the United States. Hunter at one time also served as president of the Ohio State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Their slogan “Deeds Not Words” mirrors Hunter's approach to Black women's needs.⁷⁰

These club women were involved in activities on behalf of Black women across the country. They eventually commissioned Hunter to establish Phillis Wheatley Homes across the country on behalf of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). By 1934, Hunter successfully developed a Phillis Wheatley Department modeled after her

Cleveland institution. This auxiliary would then provide similar homes in other urban centers. She converted the "Working Girls Home" into an institution bearing "the name that would be sacred to every aspiring Negro woman and girl . . ." In this way, Hunter personified the NACW's motto "Lifting as We Climb."⁷¹

Hunter and other Black women philanthropists possessed relative wealth which has yet to be methodically evaluated. Yet, they did not get rich via public service. The Cleveland Welfare Federation, for example, paid Hunter's salary. This committee composed of Black and white representatives held its first meeting on August 3, 1917. Their stated purpose, "... to study problems made acute in Cleveland by the recent incoming of Blacks from the South," facilitated for many years Hunter's \$3,000 salary. Hunter's and her contemporaries' true wealth was in their interpersonal relationships and professional associations. The correspondence between Hunter and Burroughs as well as other Black women institution builders reflects overworked, financially strapped, emotionally strained, and socially fatigued human beings. Accepting the fact that personal service continued to be the primary employer of Black women, these leaders determined to professionally train the women whom they wanted to save.⁷²

Clark-Lewis clarifies the conditions against which these women labored, "Few African-American women who migrated to the 'benevolent' North from 1900 to 1950 escaped the drudgery and low pay of domestic service."⁷³ Jacqueline Jones echoes Clark-Lewis pointing out that in general, Black women's work in the North signified domestic service. Although the covert racism ruled the North and overt often brutal conditions characterized the South, white Americans regardless of region relegated Black women to the lowliest occupational arena. Yet, Black domestics of the North, much like

domestic workers of the South, “developed coping mechanisms for dealing with the jobs they despised as much as they needed.”⁷⁴ A quote from DuBois sums up Black women’s relationship to domestic service. According to DuBois, it was work which, “. . . brought a despised race to a despised calling.”⁷⁵

But the fact remains that Charlotte stepped off the train in Cleveland with obviously no clue as to how to secure what she came in search of—employment. The fact also remains that Charlotte’s gender vulnerability predisposed her to *dangers seen and unseen*. The Phillis Wheatley Association offered Charlotte protection from prostitution, shelter from the storm, and freedom from economic futility via domestic training. In defense of domestic education, Hunter openly espoused that reality called for sensible and pragmatic solutions. According to Hunter, the social and economic problems of Black people of that time required intelligent and feasible plans for improvement. Therefore, domestic education seemed a rational and accurate response to the occupational needs of Black women and girls. Defending her methods, Hunter explained,

In answer to the criticism that our undertaking is degrading the Negro girl, because it deprives her of ambition to reach a higher economic status, I would call attention to these considerations: 1. The course is not intended for those girls whose intellectual capacity or previous training plainly indicates that they are better fitted for other kinds of work. 2. Our aim is to give Negro girls an opportunity for fuller development. We shall continue to work for this in the political, social, and economic life of Cleveland. 3. In the school our primary purpose is to equip girls for homemaking, and incidentally, use the training to solve their economic problems.⁷⁶

Hunter was a pragmatic visionary. The largest occupational group of Black women was domestic service. There was no shame or remorse about that fact. Gainful employment and honest work was honorable. There were more Black women domestics than Black female workers in agriculture, manufacturing and mechanical industries combined. The

truth was that this type of work had *always* been available and performed by African American women. Domestic service provided an outlet for resistance during slavery via subversive and covert responses to white domination. Domestic service saved the post-emancipation family from starvation. Domestic service maintained the Black family during the migration. Domestic service and Black family survival are inseparable from the history of Black women. And yet, within this undeniable reality, the Bureau of the United States Census during this time period listed homemakers as having “No Occupation.” Marks puts it this way, “. . . the “naturalness” of [women’s work] masked its importance.”⁷⁷

Marks’ discussion of domestic service refers to this work as “disguised labor.” By extension, Black female migrants’ contributions to family survival were “written off as unproductive and backward.” Quoting a Black women of 1916, Marks’ echoes a challenge introduced in Katzman’s work on domestic service. “No one should ever scorn a [Black] working woman. She has been the bone and sinew of the race.”⁷⁸ Therefore, neither the unpaid domestic work of a married women nor the sacrificial labor of domestic servants qualify as a “despised calling.” Also the census man made a mistake. These women possessed an occupation.

Historical records also contain information to the contrary. In concluding her recount of Charlotte’s northern experiences, Hunter illustrates Charlotte’s agency and industry via domestic service. Fleshing out her story with my location technique and Hinesight Methodology, we can conclude that *Charlotte* must have *worked* her way to Cleveland. In addition, Charlotte continued to work once she received the needed assistance from a socially responsible individual. Hunter then tells us that Charlotte

returned to Mississippi to buy a house and take up farming with her sister. Charlotte's decision to return to the South and her plans of home ownership evidence her desire and capability of progress and productivity. Two notions which had been systematically denied Black women employed in domestic service.

Although Charlotte returned "home" or to her southern roots with little more than her initial \$700.00, the Phillis Wheatley Association transformed an unprotected, unattached Mississippi girl into a self-sufficient woman.⁷⁹ The domestic education and training Charlotte received at "home"—the Phillis Wheatley Association—prompted Hunter to the following assessment.

No undertaking can measure its successes solely in terms of financial achievement. Some of our best girls struggle bravely against adversity, barely able to keep their heads above the waves. The measure of their success in the courage of their struggle, and in their preservation of high ideals.⁸⁰

In summary, the struggles of adjustment to foreign situations with overtones of historical oppression were not unknown to Black women in urban centers throughout the country. Migration necessitated a search for "home"—for safety among the Black women who had "always worked." Those women who participated in the Great Migration, however, needed more than a philosophically and intellectually comforting and affirming notion of "home." They needed a *real* place managed by *real* people who understood *real* problems, i.e., the *seen* dangers of homelessness, hunger, unemployment, sexual harassment, domestic abuse, illiteracy, racism, and gender discrimination. They also needed protection from the *unseen dangers* of isolation, innocence, fear, confusion, disappointment, boredom and loneliness as well.⁸¹

Chapter Four

“KEEP ON MOVIN’ ”

Migration Studies, American History, and Black Urban Folk Culture

Migration Studies

The idea of migration studies as a new subfield in Black urban history emerges from Trotter’s anthology, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*. In the closing argument of his introduction Trotter predicted that comprehension of Black migration “. . . requires an appreciation of the established scholarship as well as scholars of new sources and approaches.”¹ Black women’s mobility, safety issues, and domestic employment are promising aspects of this new scholarly subfield. But, as Hine forewarns, any efforts to reconstruct American history via Black women’s experiences should include “. . . the development of an array of analytical frameworks that allow us to understand why Black women of all classes behave in certain ways and how they acquired agency.”²

In order to chronicle Black women’s roles in the Great Migration narrative, an inclusive, dynamic, and exhaustive research tool is imperative. *Hinesight Methodology*, my conceptual framework for reclamation of Black women’s history, provides an example for mastering this challenge. Hinesight Methodology also points the way to another dialectic in African American history, i.e., the danger/mobility dialectic. This research method offers a

host of possibilities for comparative analysis. According to Trotter, what I label Hinesight Methodology, “. . . address[es] conceptual limitations in research on the Black migration, [while filling] important regional and topical gaps in our understanding of the process.”³ European historian and migration specialist, Leslie Moch refers to such revision as “putting migration into history.”⁴ Sociologist Carole Marks would argue that putting Black women into *migration* precedes that step.

Migration studies as a component of labor history also challenges us with constructing a gendered narrative. Feminist historian Ava Baron states that constructing gendered labor history includes developing theory. Baron accounts for the marginality of women in working-class history. Her explanation comes close to Marks’ criticisms. Like Marks, Baron pulls for a new labor history which speaks to the specificity of women’s experiences.⁵ Hinesight Methodology moves the subfield of migration studies in this direction.

Black Women and American History

The study of history is often debated to be either a field in the humanities and/or a social science. This tension is especially noted within urban history. The historical agents in these dramas are oftentimes still alive. Therefore, the ensuing challenges and complexities of writing the history of living people with respect to their past decisions and present conditions require both disciplines. Hinesight Methodology makes provisions for both.

Hinesight Methodology is historical in approach. (See Chart One.) It lends itself, however, to a social scientific conceptualization by capturing the “double consciousness” of Black women. With this historically fused identity of Black women as both woman and worker, Hinesight Methodology secures the migration of Black women as a central part of

urban history. Because the methodology is compatible with a variety of analytical frameworks, the established literature on Black migration takes on a broader gender dimension. This is an important and pregnant intellectual juncture in light of Earl Lewis' comment regarding urban history. "African American urban history is positioned to replace slavery and emancipation as the dominant topic of discussion in the next decade or two."⁶

Hinesight Methodology lifts the oblique language of labor history. Work no longer refers to only male occupations whether industrial or professional and the feminine professions. Work includes any and all efforts at Black survival. Hinesight Methodology gives *categorical* visibility to Black women's work regardless of region, marital status, class, and decision to leave or stay.⁷ The philanthropy and institution building of northern, middle-class Black women is as important as the domestic chores performed by the southern, working-class female migrants whom they attempted to serve. Whether or not Eddie of Tougaloo College ever migrated to Chicago and joined Carrie and the rest of her friends; whether or not Charlotte and her sister made a go of it on their Mississippi farm; whether or not Leona McCauley was actually a domestic servant or just a homemaker, Hinesight Methodology unveils the invisibility imposed upon them by male-centered themes of urban history. Thus, the "egregious void" which Hine saw at the onset of this decade begins to fill.⁸

Mobility, safety issues, and the efficacy of domestic employment are thematic findings of Hinesight Methodology. These concerns are vital to an understanding of Black women's centrality in the Great Migration. They are also windows of opportunity for further investigations of Black women's place in American history.

Black Women and Urban Folk Culture: “But you got to churn the milk to make the butter come”

The narrative of Sara Brooks teaches an invaluable lesson. Sara said that she worked hard on her father’s farm. Throughout her recollections of this hard work, she detailed several laborious tasks of farm life. The comment which introduces the final section of my document also characterizes the nature of reconstructing American history in light of Black women’s experiences. The “milk” of manuscript collections such as the Phillis Wheatley Association papers must be “churned” again and again in order to yield more historical subjects like Hunter’s Charlotte.’

For example, despite the history of our vilification and the silence of earlier, lettered Black women, it is time to step beyond the veil of fear which inhibits discussions of Black female prostitution. Black women historians must remember that Dora *did* successfully lure at least one resident of the Phillis Wheatley Home into prostitution. What happened to this woman? Were there other women who were procured in this way? Can we find any records of women entering the sex trades from the safety of working girls’ associations and other community households? Did Hunter or any of her middle-class counterparts, knowingly accept such workers into their community households in order to reform them? Did the Phillis Wheatley Association serve as a half-way house for prostitutes as well as a boarding home and training center? What happened if an unmarried resident got pregnant? Did PWA residents share information regarding contraception and abortive measures? Did groups of women with similar familial structure, region of origin, religious preference, church affiliation, skin complexion, personal hygiene habits, hobbies, interests, etc. bond in distinct and intimate ways? All of these questions lead to an investigation of an under researched component of Black urban history—the centrality of sexual economy.

Black women historians must also capture the folk culture of urban Blacks. Such exploration would highlight the dailiness which characterized community households such as the Phillis Wheatley Home. Simple, yet rich questions should be “squeezed and teased” or “milked” from archival sources. The daily activities of boarding house residents such as the music they listened to, the men *and* women they loved, the prayers they prayed, and the songs they sang might reveal a gender dimension essential to understanding the culture of Black female migrants.

Elizabeth Clark-Lewis provides an illustration of such an investigation. Her study of twenty-three migrant, domestic workers includes a brief account of boarding house socialization. One domestic worker remembered moving to a room in a boarding house after changing from live-in to day work. A different lifestyle began to take shape for her. The daily contact with members of her family who also worked in her previous employer’s household decreased. With the loosening of her kin network, the personal sphere of her life began to change as well. This migrant said that since all the boarders “. . . was doing day-work too . . . soon I was doing just about everything with them; I just liked being with these girls who was single, nice . . .”¹⁰

Historians Lesile Moch and Rachel Fuchs offer a comparative example of female migrant socialization. In their article on the poor women’s networks of nineteenth-century Paris, these scholars document intricate details of migrant women’s daily lives. The “lively subcultures and occupational solidarities” among poor female migrants to Paris, illuminated the inner world of these impoverished workers. Migration, employment, and subsequent social life in this urban setting spoke to their co-dependency and desperation as vulnerable women.¹¹

Baron, Marks, Moch, and Fuchs demonstrate ways in which women's work coexists with women's culture. Understanding work within this context, Black women's roles in labor and urban histories can be appropriately included. Also, Levine's insight, regarding the emergence of a distinct Black urban culture within migrant communities, could be further investigated. The daily activities of Phillis Wheatley Home residents could serve as the basis of this exploration.¹² Now that we have Andrienne Lash Jones' case study of Jane Edna Hunter's leadership, numerous articles on the activities of other Black club women, and theoretical essays on race, class, and gender, it is time to synthesize these findings and move on to the histories of the women who *lived* in those historical spaces.¹³

Why all this "work" for historical reclamation? A well-known nineteenth century Black minister wrote in 1883, "A true civilization can only . . . be attained when the life of woman is reached."¹⁴ Maybe this feminist thought prompted the twentieth century preacher to point Charlotte in the direction of the Phillis Wheatley Association. Or maybe Charlotte *asked him* for directions because she had heard from another migrant woman, a family member, or a side conversation during the train ride that she should knock on the Association's door. However it happened, Charlotte found her way to the Phillis Wheatley Association. I found my way to Charlotte. And hopefully new subfields in labor and urban history—such as migration studies—will allow present, aspiring, and future Black women historians to find even more ways of "lifting the veil and shattering the silence."¹⁵

ENDNOTES

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 264-65.

² Hunter, herself a migrant, came to Cleveland in May 1905. The introduction of the 1940 edition of her autobiography stated that “the story of Jane Hunter is the story of the Phillis Wheatley Association.” Both the Phillis Wheatley Association records and Jane Hunter’s papers are located in the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio. An excellent biography of Hunter written by Adrienne Lash Jones provides not only a thorough discussion of Hunter’s philanthropy but also a “penetrating glimpse” of Cleveland’s Black community via the process of institution building. Jane Edna Hunter, *A Nickel and A Prayer* (Cleveland: Elli Kani Publishing Co., 1940), 66, 141; Adrienne Lash Jones, *Jane Edna Hunter: A Case Study of Black Leadership, 1910-1950* (New York: Carlson Publishing Inc.), 1990.

³ Levine, *Black Culture*, 264-265.

⁴ Gerda Lerner, *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), xxiv. The most cited and referenced study of Black women’s work history is Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).

⁵ Stephanie J. Shaw, “Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women,” in *“We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible”: A Reader in Black Women’s History* Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, eds. (New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1995), 442.

⁶ Lawrence W. Levine, “Comment” in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, Darlene Clark Hine, ed. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 125.

Chapter One: “CAN I GET A WITNESS?”

¹ Darlene Clark Hine, “Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945,” in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New*

Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender, Joe William Trotter, Jr., ed. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana Press, 1991), 127. This is not to say that Africans did not participate in migration *before* their arrival in the Western Hemisphere. Historian Richard Rathbone suggests that fleeing captives, i.e., maroons, were present on the Continent during the Atlantic slave period. These maroons or fugitive migrants established what Rathbone calls "liberated societies." Africans' maroon communities stood in opposition to their physical removal from their homeland. Their forced migration (from the point of capture to the slave coast) often resulted in broken communal ties. These "liberated societies" reflected a mixture of ethnic groups. They were not necessarily reconstituted tribes or villages. Historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall argues that the Bambara, the largest cultural group brought to colonial Louisiana, experienced migration due to the social and political organization of their ancestral group, i.e., the Mande people. For more discussion of maroonage and slavery in the context of migration see: Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana University Press, 1992), 28-55 and Richard Rathbone, "Some Thoughts on Resistance to Enslavement in West Africa," in *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World*. Gad Heuman, ed. (Totowa, New Jersey: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1986), 11-22.

² Carter G. Woodson, *A Century of Negro Migration*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), 17; Elliott P. Skinner, "The Dialectic Between Diasporas and Homelands," in *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*, Joseph E. Harris, ed. (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 22-23.

³ Skinner, "The Dialectic Between Diasporas," 22-23.

⁴ Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Dover, Massachusetts: The Majority Press, 1976); Joe William Trotter, Jr. "Introduction: Black Migration in Historical Perspective," in *The Great Migration*, Trotter, ed., 1.

⁵ Garvey's appeal among dissatisfied people in the urban North finds its positive corollary in the economic success and empowerment of thousands of Black women throughout the African world in the "Madame C.J. Walker era" of beauty culture and self-employment. This topic, however, has yet to be undertaken as a serious component of Black urban history. Scholarship ascertaining the role migration may have played in equipping and facilitating the entrepreneurial success of Madame Walker and her independent beauty consultants would illumine the gender dimension of migration. See: Darlene Clark Hine, "Divine Obsessions: History and the Culture of Miles Davis," in *Speak Truth to Power: Black Professional Class in United States History* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1996), 115-125. Also see: Hine, "Booker T. Washington and Madam C.J. Walker," in *Speak Truth to Power*, 95-104.

⁶ Farah Jasmine Griffin, *"Who Set you Flowin'?: The African-American Migration Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

⁷ By 1865 the state of Mississippi, for example, outlawed the selling or leasing of land to Blacks through the Mississippi Black Codes. Mississippi's legislation, however, embodied the collective, Southern white opinion on the matter.

⁸ The precise years of Logan's "nadir" include 1877 through 1901. Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas, 1986 ed.), 8; Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love*, 81.

⁹ Painter, *Exodusters*, 8-9.

¹⁰ Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration, 1915-1945," 127.

¹¹ This historical pattern of freedom seeking or migration also characterizes much of the African Diaspora. To the extent that a noted political theorist, Cornel West remarked, "The fundamental theme of New World African modernity is neither integration nor separation but rather migration and emigration." Quote reprinted in Griffin, "Who Set You Flowin'?", frontispiece.

¹² Painter, *Exodusters*, xv; Hine, "Black Migration, 127; Kenneth L Kusmer, "The Black Urban Experience in American History," in *The State of Afro-American History*, Hine, ed., 111.

¹³ Trotter, Jr. "Introduction," 17.

¹⁴ Trotter, "Introduction," 1-2.

¹⁵ DuBois does not address migration in any depth. However, he does discuss the history of the "Negro people" in Philadelphia. This information provides an understanding of the migration pattern to the Northeast during the early to mid-nineteenth century as well as the Black presence in the city during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His addendum to the work, "Special Report on Negro Domestic Service," and a chapter on "The Occupations of Negroes" were quite useful regarding the history of Black domestics. W.E.B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (New York: Bloom, 1967 reprint), 8, 136-141; 427-509.

¹⁶ Trotter, "Introduction," 4.

¹⁷ Trotter, "Introduction," 8-9.

¹⁸ The scholarship of the war and post-war period, however, established the notion of secondary migration or intra-regional travel patterns as well as regional, sub regional, and occupational specificity. Trotter, "Introduction," 5.

¹⁹ Trotter, "Introduction," 10-11. Sociologist E. Franklin Frazier's work on Black families is often cited as an example of this literature. See: E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.)

²⁰ Levine refers to the term ghetto as an "atavism." As such, the word ghetto continually resurfaces in the thought and terminology of Black history. Levine believes that the term's persistence undermines intellectual strivings for more sophisticated and knowledgeable understanding of the Afro-American past. He believes the use of the terms *ghetto* confuses scholars of African American history because it describes an urban area in which Italian Jews were forced to live centuries ago. Levine's objection to the term *ghetto* reiterates his disdain for meshing and conflating Black people's voices and choices into the indistinguishable, amorphous and passive identity known as "the masses." In his earlier work as well as the aforementioned "Comment," Levine makes himself clear on this issue. The "Comment," however, focuses on the threat of the continued use of the word ghetto. "The term ghetto," states Levine, "as it has come to be applied, brings to mind only one segment of the diversity of groups that make up the Afro-American populace, blurs the distinctions between Black northerners and southerners, migrants and old settlers, West Indians and native-born, and transforms a heterogeneous, dynamic group into a stereotyped monolithic mass." Consequently, historians too frequently, "... perpetuate a term coined in a distant era to cover a specific situation and blindly and loosely apply it to a wide variety of situations and conditions in a much later age." In argument to the contrary, Kenneth L. Kusmer comfortably refers to the development of Black segregation in urban cities as ghettoization. But it also legitimately falls short of the cultural focus found in later migration studies. Kusmer, "The Black Experience," 95, 98-102, 108; Levine, "Comment," 125, 126; Levine, *Black Consciousness*, 264-265. Also see: Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978).

²¹ The University Press of Mississippi published a volume which addresses this oversight. The essays were originally presented at a national symposium, "Those Who Stayed Home During the Great Migration, 1915-Present" held on the campus of Jackson State University during the Fall of 1989. See: *Black Exodus: The Great Migration From the American South*, Alferdteen Harrison, ed., (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1991). Several other Black migration investigations of the early 1990's merit recognition: Malaika Adero, ed. *Up South: Stories, Studies, and Letters of This Century's Migration* (New York: The New Press, 1993); E. Marvin Goodwin, *Black Migration in America From 1915 to 1960: An Uneasy Exodus* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990); Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Migration* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989).

²² Trotter, "Introduction," 14.

²³ Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990).

²⁴ Hine, "Black Migration," 129. The concept of "hine sight" developed over fourteen years of historical research reflects the evolution of the scholar's thinking about Black women both as historical subjects and as academicians. Laying claim to migration as "an apt metaphor" for her personal intellectual history or change over time as a Black woman historian, Hine delivers a look back which carries American historiography forward, i.e., the centrality of Black women to the history of America. Darlene

Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-constructing of American History* (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, 1994), xxx.

²⁵ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138-141.

²⁶ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138, 140.

²⁷ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 139.

²⁸ Carole Marks explains, "As they had in the South, most Black women in the North worked as domestics. The general term "domestic" includes a variety of work arrangements. In the South, a live-out system had predominated in which a domestic lived near her employers and was able to return to her own home at scheduled intervals. In the North, shortly after the migration, a live-in system predominated in which a domestic lived with her employers, receiving time off periodically, such as two Sundays a month." Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington, Illinois: Indiana University Press), 129; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 139.

²⁹ "Charlotte came home regularly on her days off, and spent much of her leisure time in our clubs," comments Ms. Hunter. The references to the Phillis Wheatley facility as "home" and the range of possible interpersonal interactions among its inhabitants are also promising sources of information on the "inner lives" of Black women migrants. Hunter, *A Nickel*, 139.

³⁰ It is important to outline and "own" the connection between the labor of Black women and the advances of "[white] women's rights" and ensuing economic, social, and political opportunities. In so doing, we see the creation of the myths surrounding Black women's sexuality and the reasons why Black women preferred not to reside with white families, e.g., rape by white men and the racist often sadistic treatment they received at the hands of white women. There is an entire body of works (both primary and secondary) which address these issues including: Deborah Gray White, *Ar'nt I a Woman? Female Slaves In the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985); Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love*, Linda Brent, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 1813-1897* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Melton Alonza McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1991); Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (New York: Pandora Press, 1987.)

³¹ Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance" *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, (Summer 1989) v 14, n 4, 915, 920; reprinted in Hine, *Hine Sight*, 37-47; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," in *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible,"* Hine, King, and Reed, eds., 13.

³² Hine, "Black Migration," 130, 138.

³³ Hine reflects, "Today, there are impressive shifts underway in American

history, especially in the wake of the triumphs of the new social history, and the growth and maturation of Black history and women's history. In hindsight, I am struck by how consumed I was with questions of race and race relations throughout both my undergraduate career at Roosevelt University and my subsequent graduate career at Kent State University where I studied with the historian August Meier. In fact, questions of race dominated virtually all academic conversations. Questions of sex and class were rarely if ever articulated. Asking the rights questions is often more important and revealing than the answers we discover. In sum, Black women came to subjecthood and acquired agency through the creation of community." Hine, *Hine Sight*, xix-xxii passim.

³⁴ Hine states that most single Black women traveled the entire distance in one trip and in the company of others. Hine, "Black Migration," 131.

³⁵ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 140.

³⁶ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 140. [emphasis mine]

³⁷ Spencer R. Crew, *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1915-1940*, (Washington, DC: The National Museum of American History Smithsonian Institute, 1987), 12. This book is not a history text. It is a published exhibition script from the Smithsonian's public collection of art history documenting the Great Migration.

³⁸ Jacqueline Jones recounts the experience of Elviry Magee. An elderly Black woman who boasted of sixty years in the tobacco industry, Elviry Magee claimed to have taught "old Man Hughes" (a local man of substantial wealth) all he knew about tobacco. Although she gave "Mister John his start," he failed to adequately compensate her. In her own words, "De Lawd called him away . . . I believe one reason was case he didn't pay niggers nothin'. I is best hand—he say so hisse'f—an' he didn't never pay me no mo'n fifty to sebenty-five cents a day." The interesting point is that both Elviry Magee as well as Charlotte, ". . . took comfort in the belief that God would eventually vindicate her claim." Sara Brooks, another Black woman, migrated to Cleveland in 1940. Despite her geographic relocation she maintained the foundational ethic and moral code instilled in her by her father. Her autobiography testifies of the faith and practicality with which she mediated life. Although domestic service defined her life in the South, Brooks understood that ". . . cookin and cleanin wasn't any more [colored women's] job than it was anybody else's." Yet, work, honesty, respect for others and faith in God continued to be non-negotiable expectations of Black life. This continuity of belief contextualizes the urban process and facilitates the development of Black urban folk culture. Jones, *Labor of Love*, 140-41; Thordis Simonsen, ed. *You May Plow Here: The Narrative of Sara Brooks* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976), 21-23, 31, 188.

³⁹ George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 1967), 60.

⁴⁰ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 154; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 141.

⁴¹ R.H. Leavell, "Negro Migration from Mississippi," in J.H. Dillard, ed. *Negro Migration in 1916-17* (Washington, DC: Department of Labor, Government Printing Office, 1919), 17. Jerry W. Ward refers to migration as "uprootedness" and "rootedness" refers to those who stayed in the South. Jerry W. Ward, "The Meaning of the Migration As Seen in Southern Literature," in *Those Who Stayed: A Collection of Papers*, Doris E. Saunders, ed. (Jackson, MI: Jackson State University, 1989) 28.

⁴² Thomas Woofter, *Negro Migration: Change in Rural Organization and Population of the Cotton Belt* (New York: W. D. Gray, 1920) 8; Quote taken from Dernoral Davis, "To Go or To Stay: The Issue of Black Migration in the 20th Century," in *Those Who Stayed*, Saunders, ed., 14; C. Eric Lincoln, "Those Who Stayed," in *Those Who Stayed*, Saunders, ed., 7.

⁴³ Margaret Walker Alexander, "From Field to Factory: Those Who Stayed," in *Those Who Stayed*, Saunders, ed., 27.

⁴⁴ Linda Reed, "Parks, Rosa (1913-)," in *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1993), 907-908.

⁴⁵ Neil R. McMillen, "The Migration and Black Protest in Jim Crow Mississippi," in *Black Exodus*, Harrison, ed., 83-99.

⁴⁶ McMillen, "The Migration," 86-88; 91-92 passim.

⁴⁷ See: Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). For a more in depth analysis of the ethical and ideological backgrounds of these women see Shaw's *What a Women Ought to Be and to Do*.

⁴⁸ Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992).

⁴⁹ The notion of "homeplace" comes from feminist scholar and culture critic, bell hooks. bell hooks defines "homeplace" as those spaces which were created and kept by Black women. Places such as the kitchen, where "... we had the opportunity to grow and develop, to nurture our spirits." Farah Jasmine Griffin incorporates bell hook's creation in her discussion of the migrant's urban landscape. Griffin, "Who Set You Flowin'?", 107-108. Also see: bell hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

⁵⁰ Carole C. Marks, "The Bone and Sinew of the Race: Black Women, Domestic Service, and Labor Migration," in *Families on the Move: Migration, Immigration, Emigration, and Mobility*, Barbara H. Settles, Daniel E. Hanks III, and Marvin B. Sussman, eds. (New York: The Haworth Press, 1993), 156-159.

⁵¹ A specific investigation of one stay-at-home community would be an interesting test of Thomas' community building process theory. Dr. Walker claims that

southern stay-at-homes already possessed what southern migrants had to build in order to survive in the North. Focusing on such a situation as a control, Thomas' theory could be tested by the argument that some Blacks did not consider migration because of their community building processes. Dr. Davis' remarks convince me of this idea, ". . . what was apt to convince one Black to migrate would not necessarily motivate another. These motivation factors are important for more than what they reveal about the reason Blacks migrated. They contain clues, possibly the keys, to a fuller understanding of the prevailing local community milieu and the likely explanations to why many Blacks chose not to migrate." Davis, "To Go or To Stay," 15; Ward, "The Meaning of the Migration," 28.

⁵² Mrs. McCauley could have been a laundress. It is also probable that with the support of her parents with childcare she may have performed "day work." Rosa Parks, "One Who Stayed, Remarks," in *Those Who Stayed*, Saunders, ed. 12; Reed, "Parks," 907.

⁵³ "'One very important difference between white people and Black people is that white people think that you *are* your work Now, a Black person has more sense than that because [she] knows that what I am doing doesn't have anything to do with what I want to do or what I do when I am doing for myself. Now, Black people think that my work is just what I have to do to get what I want.'" quoted in Sharon Harley, "When Your Work Is Not Who You Are: The Development of a Working-Class Consciousness Among Afro-American Women," in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible*, Hine, King, and Reed, eds., 25.

⁵⁴ Alexander, "From Field to Factory," 27.

⁵⁵ The body of literature on Black women's history includes many outstanding journal essays, anthologies, readers, a sixteen-volume series, and a two-volume encyclopedia. Many of the articles continue to be reprinted and revised because of their exceptional insight and research. An adequate introduction to this scholarship includes: Darlene Clark Hine, "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silence: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom," in *The State of Afro-American History* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 223-249; Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers During the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1995), 3-24; Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of St. Luke," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* v 14 (Spring 1989), 610-633; Tera W. Hunter, "Domestic Workers in the South," in *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1993), 342-345; Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "Teaching The History of Black Women: A Bibliographical Essay" in *Black Women's History: Theory and Practice*, Darlene Clark Hine, ed. (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc.); Jacqueline Labor of Love, *Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex In America*,

(New York: Bantam Books, 1984); Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images*, (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat, 1978); bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-construction of American History*, (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1994); *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, Darlene Clark Hine, Elsa Barkley Brown, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds. (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1993); *Black Women in United States History: A Carlson Publishing Series*, Darlene Clark Hine, ed. (Brooklyn, New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc.); Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1982); L. Jeanne Noble, *Beautiful, Also, Are the Souls of My Black Sisters: A History of the Black Women in America* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1978); La Frances Rodgers-Rose, *The Black Woman*, (London: Sage Publications, Inc., 1980); Jessie Carney Smith, *Notable Black American Women* (Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1992); June Sochen, *Herstory: A Woman's View of American History* (New York: Alfred Publishing Co., 1974).

⁵⁶ Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape," 912-13 reprinted in Hine, *Hine Sight*, 37-47; Higginbotham, "African American Women's History," 13.

⁵⁷ Hine, "Rape," 912-13; Higginbotham, "African American Women's History," 13; Elsa Barkley Brown, "'What Has Happened Here': The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics," in *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible,"* Hine, King, and Reed, eds.

⁵⁸ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138-41; Hine, "Rape," 37.

⁵⁹ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138-41; Hine, "Rape," 37.

⁶⁰ Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1984), 104.

⁶¹ Giddings, *When and Where*, 103-104.

⁶² Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women," in *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible,"* Hine, King, and Reed, eds., 433. Shaw's book on Black professional women provides an analysis of the developmental stages experienced by many of these leaders. See: Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

⁶³ Shaw, "Black Club Women," 433, 444. For a more in depth analysis of the ethical and ideological backgrounds of these women see Shaw's *What a Women Ought to Be and to Do*.

⁶⁴ Shaw, "Black Club Women," 439-441.

⁶⁵ Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 122-23 passim [emphasis mine].

⁶⁶ Hine, "Rape," 47.

Chapter Two: "NO OCCUPATION"

¹ Mrs. Stazzie Hudson Haynes, "The Married Negro Wage Earner," December 19, 1938. Unpublished paper. Phillis Wheatley Association Manuscript Collection, container 10, folder 4, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

² Levine, *Black Culture*, 264-265; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138-141.

³ Tera W. Hunter, "Domination and Resistance: The Politics of Wage Household Labor in New South Atlanta," in *"We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible,"* Hine, King, and Reed, eds., 353. David Katzman puts it plainly, "Two hundred years of domination by Southern whites set a pattern from which both whites and Blacks found it difficult to vary." David M. Katzman, *Seven Days A Week: Women and Domestic Service in Industrializing America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 194.

⁴ Tera W. Hunter, "Domestic Workers in the South," in *Black Women in America*, Hine, Brown, and Terborg-Penn, eds., 343.

⁵ In addition to the Tidall book, another book on Southern history offer an overview of the region. See: Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *The Slave Economy of the Old South: Selected Essays in Economic and Social History* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1968.) For a later time period see: Robin D. G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). Furthermore, the study of the South would be inadequate without the works of both John Hope Franklin and C. Vann Woodward.

⁶ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 2, 3.

⁷ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 33, 37.

⁸ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 53-56, 60-61.

⁹ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 111-113.

¹⁰ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 412.

¹¹ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 411-412.

¹² Tindall, *The Emergence*, 143-146.

¹³ Black women's work in the Northeast was not far a field of their Southern counterparts. In a "Special Report on Negro Domestic Service" a study appended to DuBois' 1899 publication, Isabel Eaton found that ninety-one percent (91%) of the "colored working women" of Pennsylvania were employed in domestic service. Isabel Eaton, "Special Report on Negro Domestic Service in the Seventh Ward," in W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro*, 428.

¹⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 127; Hunter, "Domestic Workers," 343.

¹⁵ Harley, "When Your Work," 27.

¹⁶ Hunter, "Domestic Workers," 343; Katzman, *Seven Days*, 199; Marks, *Farewell*, 129; For a full discussion of the dynamics of daywork, see: Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *"This Work Had A End:" African-American Domestic Workers in Washington, DC, 1910-1940: Working Paper 2*, (Alexandria, Virginia: Northern Virginia Community College, 1985); also reprinted in *"To Toil the Livelong Day: America's Women at Work, 1780-1980*, Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton, eds. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1987). See also: Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domesticity in Washington, DC, 1910-1940* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

¹⁷ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 128.

¹⁸ Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 28, 30-31, 34.

¹⁹ Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 172-173.

²⁰ Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 173-174.

²¹ Black women's work in the Northeast was not far a field of their Southern counterparts. In a "Special Report on Negro Domestic Service" a study appended to DuBois' 1899 publication, Isabel Eaton found that ninety-one percent (91%) of the "colored working women" of Pennsylvania were employed in domestic service. Eaton, "Special Report on Negro Domestic," 428.

²² Katzman, *Seven Days*, 201.

²³ "There is little evidence to suggest that unemployed Black husbands took care of cleaning, cooking, or child-care while their wives were at work." Jones, *Labor of Love*, 128-130.

²⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 130-31; Katzman, *Seven Days*, 194-200. For an extensive treatment of the historical relationship between white mistresses and enslaved women, see Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982) and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1988.)

²⁵ Historian Sharon Harley explains that, "In the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, because of widespread and trenchant racial and gender discrimination, Black women often found their *unpaid* domestic work in their own homes and in their community, especially their church, a great source of pride." Sharon Harley, "For the Good of Family and Race: Gender, Work, and Domestic Roles in the Black Community, 1880-1930," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, v 15 n 2, (Winter 1990), 237 [emphasis mine]; Crew, *Field to Factory*, 28.

²⁶ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 130-31.; Katzman, *Seven Days*, 197; Hunter, "Domination and Resistance," 346.

²⁷ Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, "*This Work Had a End*," 1, 20, 22-23.

²⁸ Quoted in Harley, "When Your Work," 25. [emphasis mine]

²⁹ Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 188.

³⁰ Katzman, *Seven Days*, 195-197.

³¹ Katzman, *Seven Days*, 195; Hunter, "Domination and Resistance," 344, 346-47. Strikes or labor stoppages although few in number represented "profound expressions of household workers' opposition to oppression." This topic receives more attention in forthcoming discussion of Black women's involvement in organized labor.

³² The "service pan," "pan-toting," or "food basket" (viewed as compensation by working Black women and as charity by white employers) symbolized the racial contract and social negotiation of Southern society. Hunter, "Domination and Resistance," 344; Katzman, *Seven Days*, 198; Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 174, 180.

³³ Harley, "When Your Work," 31-32.

³⁴ Shaw, *What a Woman*, 1-4.

³⁵ Shaw, *What a Woman*, 8, 113-114, 208.

³⁶ Shaw, *What a Woman*, 8, 113-114, 208.

³⁷ Tougaloo "College" at that time would have functioned more as a secondary school or high school versus the curriculum of an institution of higher education or actual college.

³⁸ Eddie to Carrie, 25 September 1928. Carrie Spears Collection. 1927-1928, Box 40 Manuscript no. 93.04. The Lillian Pierce Benboom Room, (Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Mississippi).

³⁹ Eddie to Carrie, 25 September 1928.

⁴⁰ It was not atypical for migrants to request some form of assistance with their travel plans. The "Letters of Negro Migrants," are filled with petitions for "passes" and "advances" for transportation costs. Most of these appeals are for railway transportation. Many times migrants only requested information. Those migrants believing there to be an precise date for the "great northern drive" asked the *Chicago Defender* to confirm their sources. Many of these dates were often on either Wednesdays or Saturdays, logical choices due to pay days. See: Emmett Scott, "Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918," *Journal of Negro History* 4 (July 1919), 316-318 and Emmett J. Scott, *Negro Migration During the War* (New York: Arno Press, 1969, 29-33.

⁴¹ Scott, "Letters of Negro Migrants," 316-318. Selected letters from Black women migrants are reprinted in *America's Working Women: A Documentary History 1600 to the Present*, Rosalyn Baxandall, Linda Gordon, Susan Reverby, eds. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995 ed.), 130-31.

⁴² Levine, *Black Culture*, 264-265.

⁴³ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138, 140.

⁴⁴ "A migrant's place of residence in the South often influenced where he or she settled in the North. Since most migrants had little money, they used the cheapest and most direct route north. Mississippi and Louisiana residents frequently relocated to Chicago. Railroads . . . carried many migrants north. Thousands of migrants also traveled north on buses, automobiles, and trucks." Crew, *Field to Factory*, 28, 30.

⁴⁵ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 141.

⁴⁶ Betina Aptheker, *Woman's Legacy: Essays on Race, Sex and Class*, (Amherst, Massachusetts: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1982), 113; Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 151-152. For complete discussion of the matter see: Katzman, *Seven Days A Week*.

⁴⁷ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 134; Harley, "When Your Work," 29-30 *passim*.

⁴⁸ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 134.

⁴⁹ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 134, 135; 138-40.

⁵⁰ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 142.

⁵¹ These ten year olds may have migrated to the nearest urban area and worked as domestics in white households. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis tells of one woman's first job at age nine. Quoting one of the migrant women, Bernice Reeder, she explains the pattern and early introduction of labor is Black women's lives. After the short period of tutelage which preceded a female child's first job as a live-in servant for a white family, Bernice explained, "Like everybody, by nearly nine I went in to work . . . at just nine years old! I was so scared. Nobody cared you were a child . . . you was a worker to them . . ." Clark-Lewis, *"This Work Had A' End,"* 10; Jones, *Labor of Love*, 142.

⁵² Marks, *Farewell*, 39-44.

⁵³ Marks, *Farewell*, 39-44; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 140; Hine, "Black Migration," 129. The *Charlotte* who completes the story is an acceptable historical character in the "combination" approach of Hinesight methodology.

⁵⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 149; Katzman, *Seven Days*, 196.

⁵⁵ Hunter, "Domination and Resistance," 353.

⁵⁶ There were other post-slavery protests in the form of labor stoppages, e.g., 1866 washerwomen in Jackson, Mississippi, the 1877 strike of laundresses in Galveston and Black women joined other laborers in the National Tobacco Workers Union strike of 1898. It is statistical fact that washerwomen represented the largest single category of waged household workers in Atlanta, and by 1900 their total numbers exceeded all other domestics combined. Hunter, "Domination and Resistance," 335-357. See also: the statistics from the "special report" on Pennsylvania's domestic servants. Eaton, "Special Report on Negro Domestic," 424-509.

⁵⁷ Tindall, *The Emergence*, 146.

⁵⁸ Harley, "When Your Work," 29.

⁵⁹ Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 149-173.

⁶⁰ Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 153.

⁶¹ Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 149-150 passim. For a comparative look at labor migration with respect to women's roles see: Donna R. Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990*, (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994).

⁶² Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 151.

⁶³ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 148.

⁶⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 149, 150.

Chapter Three: "SHELTER IN THE TIME OF STORM"

¹ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 88.

² Bertha A. Fennell, "Phillis Wheatley Association. 'Not an institution—a home.'" unpublished paper. Phillis Wheatley Association Manuscript Collection, container 10, folder 4, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

³ Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man." (Special thanks to Dr. David Bailey of Michigan State University Department of History for bringing this poem to my attention.)

⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 190.

⁵ Fennell, "Phillis Wheatley Association," 1. Darlene Clark Hine, "'We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible': The Philanthropic Work of Black Women" in *Hine Sight*, 109-128; Jones, *Jane Edna Hunter*.

⁶ Clark-Lewis, *This Work Had A' End*, 7; Jones, *Labor of Love*, 163, Hunter, *A Nickel*, 13-14, 25, 29; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 115; Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 151-152.

⁷ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 29-31. Sadie Iola Daniel, *Women Builders*, (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, 1970), 171.

⁸ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 32; Daniel, *Women Builders*, 171.

⁹ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 33-37.

¹⁰ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 38-44 passim.

¹¹ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 49 - 50.

¹² Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 137.

¹³ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 49 - 50. Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 116.

¹⁴ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 63-65; Hine, "Black Migration," 92.

¹⁵ Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 22, 177, 183, 195-197.

¹⁶ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 66-67; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 116-118 passim.

¹⁷ Hine explains, "The initial orientation and objectives of the early Black women's clubs focused on raising the cultural, intellectual, and educational status of Black women and on creating a positive image of their sexuality. The broad inclusive vision of these indomitable club women mandated an end to all racial and gender discrimination. Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 115, 121 passim; Harley, "When Your Work," 50; Jane E. Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need Among Colored Women," 3. unpublished paper. Phillis Wheatley Association Manuscript Collection, container 10, folder 4, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

¹⁸ Harley, "The Middle Class," in *Black Women in America*, Hine, Brown, and Terborg-Penn, eds., 788; Shaw, "Black Club Women," 436; For a thorough examination

of Walker, see: Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of St. Luke," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14 (Spring 1989), 610-633.

¹⁹ Elaine M. Smith, "Bethune, Mary McLeod, (1875-1955)," in *Black Women in America*, Hine, Brown, and Terborg-Penn, eds., 113-127; Shaw, *What a Woman*, 68-69; Shaw, "Black Club Women," 436-437; Dorothy Salem, "National Association of Colored Women," in *Black Women in America*, 842-851; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "Burroughs, Nannie Helen (1879-1961)," in *Black Women in America*, 201.

²⁰ "Up to 1905, Hunter's life was characterized by the same trials and tribulations experienced by most poor, barely educated, young, single Black Women who grew up in the impoverished South and who believed that nursing or domestic service, coupled with migration, was the key to a better life in the North. The details of Hunter's migration experience, her struggles to find a job and a decent, affordable place to live, and the process through which she became part of a community of women mirrored the processes of migration, immigration, and adaptation of . . . American native-born farm women." Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 117; Hine, *Speak Truth to Power*, 95; Elaine M. Smith, "Bethune," 113-127; Shaw, *What a Woman*, 68-69; Shaw, "Black Club Women," 436-437; Dorothy Salem, "National Association of Colored Women," in *Black Women in America*, 842-851.

²¹ Shaw, *What A Woman*, 164-187.

²² Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 116; Harley, "The Middle Class," 788.

²³ Harley, "The Middle Class," 788; Higginbotham, "Burroughs," 201; A'Lelia Perry Bundles, "Walker, Madam C. J. (Sarah Breedlove) (1867-1919)," in *Black Women In America*, Hine, Brown, and Terborg-Penn, eds., 1209; Gertrude W. Marlowe, "Walker, Maggie Lena (c. 1867-1934)," in *Black Women in America*, Hine, Brown, and Terborg-Penn, eds., 1215; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 116; Shaw, *What a Woman*, 197-198.

²⁴ Harley, "The Middle Class," 787-788; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 7-29, 149-181.

²⁵ Harley, "The Middle Class," 789; Shaw, *What a Woman*, 3-7.

²⁶ Harley, "The Middle Class," 787; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 116; Shaw, *What a Woman*, 197-198 ; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 7-29;

²⁷ A noteworthy exception to this type of white philanthropy was Cleveland's "Karamu House." Karamu is Swahili for "center of the community" and "a place of employment." Russell and Rowena Jelliffe moved their center for the artistic expression of young Black children to Cleveland in 1915. Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy, *Anyplace But Here* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1945), 278-286; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 110-111, 120; Shaw, *What a Woman*, 208.

²⁸ Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 110-111; Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 2; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 139.

²⁹ Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 2; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138.

³⁰ Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 2; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 138.

³¹ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 5, 10, 17.

³² Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 11.

³³ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 16, 19, 21-22.

³⁶ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 35.

³⁷ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 140, 152-153; Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color*, 7-29; Shaw, "Black Club Women," 433-434.

³⁸ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 140, 152-153.

³⁹ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 148-153.

⁴⁰ Jasmine Farah Griffin comments on the effect of gospel-blues upon northern congregations. Scholars such as Griffin agree that the migration significantly impacted northern Black church culture. The gospel-blues of the migrants presented a form of praise and expression which offended some established Black Protestant churches. The creation of northern "store front" churches signals one response. The increase in membership in particular denominations serves as another. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 92, 95; Griffin, "Who Set You Flowin'?", 61. For the biography of the life of one northern Black church see: Samuel G. Freedman, *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of a Black Church* (New York: Harper, 1993).

⁴¹ Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 160.

⁴² Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 160-166, 257.

⁴³ The eight cities included Chicago, Detroit, New York, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Philadelphia Pittsburgh. Some historians round Cleveland's population growth to 308%. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, chapters 1 and 7; Cleveland's Black population prior to the Civil War was very small. Blacks numbered about 6, 000 or 1.6 percent. Despite the fact that Blacks lived in every one of the forty-two wards, "Blacks in every economic and social echelon understood the unspoken parameters inside which they were expected to remain." Lash, *Jane Edna Hunter*, 2, 7; Florette Henri, *Black Migration Movement North, 1900-1920: The Road from Myth to Man* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1976), 69.

⁴⁴ Marks, *Farewell*, 145.

⁴⁵ Henri, *Black Migration*, 102; Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape*, 42.

⁴⁶ Marks, *Farewell*, 146-47.

⁴⁷ Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 119; Marks, *Farewell*, 146; Hunter, *A Nickel*, 68.

⁴⁸ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 93-100; Shaw, "Black Club Women," 438.

⁴⁹ City officials including politicians had, ". . . a certain respect for [Hunter's] influence and the Phillis Wheatley Association continued to afford a safe refuge for the unprotected." Hunter, *A Nickel*, 69, 127-129 passim.

⁵⁰ Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*, (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press); Shaw, "Black Club Women," 441-442.

⁵¹ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 93-100 passim.

⁵² Hine, "Rape," 916-919. Also see: Deborah Gray White, "Mining the Forgotten: Manuscript Sources for Black Women's History," *Journal Of American History*, v 74 (June 1987), 237-42. For White's intensive look at stereotypes of Black womanhood during the ante-bellum period see: White, *Ar'n't I A Woman?*.

⁵³ Hazel V. Carby, "It Jus Be's Dat Way Sometime": The Sexual Politics of Women's Blues," in *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-Cultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, Vicki L. Ruiz and Ellen Carol DuBois, eds., (New York: Routledge, 1994, 2nd ed.), 240-242 passim.

⁵⁴ Richard W. Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1992); With the publication of his book Thomas had expanded his theoretical approach beyond Trotter's race/class or proletarian approach. His insistence on the community building process (instead of an argument based on the proletarianization of rural, migrant men) makes the social, familial, and cultural work of women a more than influential factor in Black urbanization. Thomas' case study now comes closer to the re-construction conceptualizations espoused by Hine. Other case studies in African American urban history include: Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916-1930* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1987); James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Vintage, 1991); Harold A. McDougall, *Black Baltimore: A New Theory of Community*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); and Joe William Trotter, Jr. *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1985).

⁵⁵ Thomas, *Life For Us*, 89, 95, 100, 135-136; Marks, *Farewell*, 130; Henri, *Black Migration*, 54, 69, 102-103, 142-43.

⁵⁶ Thomas, *Life for Us*, 110-121 passim; Simonsen, *You May Plow*, 182.

⁵⁷ Thomas, *Life for Us*, 110-121 passim; Henri, *Black Migration*, 119.

⁵⁸ Thomas, *Life For Us*, 176.

⁵⁹ Thomas, *Life For Us*, 176.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *Life For Us*, 186; Biblical Passage, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" Proverbs 31:27.

⁶¹ This Detroit based organization served as the institutional model for Housewives Leagues across the country including a chapter in Cleveland, Ohio. Thomas, *Life For Us*, 214-215; Hine, "The Housewives' League of Detroit: Black Women and Economic Nationalism," in *Hine Sight*, 129. For a brief summary of this group see: Darlene Clark Hine, "Housewives' League of Detroit," in *Black Women in America*, 584-586.

⁶² Hine, "Black Migration," 93.

⁶³ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 159.

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, "Domestic Workers in the North," in *Black Women in America*, 341.

⁶⁵ Clark-Lewis, "Domestic Workers," 341.

⁶⁶ Marks, *Farewell*, 129; Clark-Lewis, "Domestic Workers," 341.

⁶⁷ Henri, *Black Migration*, 54; Clark-Lewis, "Domestic Workers," 342.

⁶⁸ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 159.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 159; Bundles, "Walker, Madam," 1212; Henri, *Black Migration*, 142; "Hoeing the fields, stripping the tobacco plants, performing the endless round of household tasks in the homes of others, as well as her own, cleaning shop and office, waiting and serving. And for smaller numbers social workers, teachers, nurses, clothing makers, clerical workers, physicians, librarians, entertainers, writers, beauticians, etc. At all these things the Negro woman works." Mrs. Sazzie Hudson Haynes, "Careers for Negro Women" n.d.

⁷⁰ Hunter attempted to secure other Black women's economic stability in her efforts to affiliate the PWA with the NACW through the Ohio Federation. The NACW officers included some of the most influential Black women in the United States. These women were involved in activities on behalf of Black women across the country. By 1934, Hunter successfully developed a Phillis Wheatley Department modeled after her Cleveland institution. This auxiliary would then provide similar homes in other urban

centers. Jones, *Labor of Love*, 161; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 120-125; Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 3,4.

⁷¹ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 161; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 120-125; Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 3,4; Jones, *Jane Edna Hunter*, 96-97.

⁷² Jones, *Labor of Love*, 161; Hine, "'We Specialize,'" 120-125; Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 3,4; Scott, *Negro Migration During the War*, 126.

⁷³ Clark-Lewis, "Domestic Workers," 342.

⁷⁴ Jones, *Labor of Love*, 164-165 passim.

⁷⁵ DuBois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 25.

⁷⁶ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 150-165 passim; Hunter, "The Greatest Un-Met Social Need," 3. Fennell, "Phillis Wheatley".

⁷⁷ Marks' social scientific critique of the Great migration schematically sets migration within a "core/periphery" concept or dialectic. Labor migrations, according to Marks, are created by "specific historical-structural transformations." A fair understanding of such population shifts requires instruments for putting into historical terms the "patterns of penetration" into the periphery (what historians refer to as the "sending area" and "push factors") and the actual migration or movement into the core. (The "core" in historical writings is the "receiving area" or "pull factors.") But even Marks' structural analysis inadvertently focuses on industrial labor, i.e., it is male centered. And it is not surprising that most of the secondary literature, by default of course, "... imply a relatively passive and secondary role for women, placing them on the periphery of the dynamic of migration." The Black woman's work and role as expressed by her mobility still awaits a methodological treatment which places her more accurately within the Great Migration saga. And if possible her full participation in African American urban history at large. Jones, *Labor of Love*, 162; Marks, *Farewell*, 4-7, 18, 45.

⁷⁸ Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 154, 170-171 passim; Katzman, *Seven Days*, 84.

⁷⁹ Daniel, *Women Builders*, 174.

⁸⁰ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 141.

⁸¹ Hunter, *A Nickel*, 69, 131; Marks, "The Bone and Sinew," 156-57.

Chapter Four: “KEEP ON MOVIN”

¹ Trotter, “Introduction,” 17.

² Trotter, “Introduction,” 15.

³ Trotter, “Introduction,” 15.

⁴ Moch entitled the first section of her book “Putting Migration into History,” in *Moving Europeans*. Marks, in her article on migration and domestic workers, argues the same point. Marks, “The Bone and Sinew,” 149-173.

⁵ Ava Baron, “Gender and Labor History: Learning From the Past, Looking to the Future,” in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor*, Ava Baron, ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-46.

⁶ Earl Lewis, “Review Comment,” in Thomas, *Life For Us*, front cover flap.

⁷ Jones’ *Labor of Love* is the definitive source on this topic.

⁸ Sociologist Carole Marks supports Hine’s scholarly chastening. Marks adds a challenge for social scientists. Marks encourages her colleagues to re-evaluate their writings on migration. According to Marks, most social science literature centers on male themes. Until recently even historians were guilty of this short sightedness. Marks states that historical studies of migration, “. . . rarely discuss the role played by women choosing instead to focus on labor agents, northern industries, and the recruitment of Black men.” Marks, “The Bone and Sinew,” 150.

⁹ Simonsen, *You May Plow Here*, 51.

¹⁰ Clark-Lewis, “*This Work Had A’ End*,” 29-30 passim.

¹¹ Leslie Page Moch and Rachel G. Fuchs, “Getting Along: Poor Women’s Networks in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” in *French Historical Studies*, v 18 n 1 (Spring 1993), 34-49.

¹² Levine seems to suggest this avenue of investigation, i.e., the daily lives of African Americans as the context of historical analysis. See: Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*.

¹³ The suggestion of Hazel Carby regarding the role of gospel-blues is one source of information. The store front churches alluded to by Farah Griffin is another possible “milking” source. Another avenue involves expanding the categories of analysis which historians use to develop theories and discover new sources. Hine invites historians to explore an institutional approach which transcends race, class, and gender. Focusing on the four cornerstones of African American survival and progress—families, schools, churches, and health care—Hine points to three other categories of analysis, i.e., culture, consciousness, and community. These concepts would shed light on the personal lives of

individual migrant women who lived within the *new* institution of Black urban folk culture, the community household. Levine, "Comment," 125; Carby, "It Jus Be's Dat Way"; Griffin, "*Who Set You Flowin'?*", 61; Darlene Clark Hine, "Culture, Consciousness, and Community: The Making of an African American Women History," in *Speak Truth to Power*, 53-64.

¹⁴ Quoted in Jones, *Jane Edna Hunter*, 14.

¹⁵ "Lifting the Veil, Shattering the Silence: Black Women's History in Slavery and Freedom" is fundamental to my Hinesight Methodology. It is also one of the first historiographical essays in Black women's history. Originally published in the 1986 volume, *the State of Afro-American History*, Hine wrote this article, ". . . to cover the one major theme that had been omitted or that remained inadequately addressed in the other essays [in the volume] . . . the history of Black women was its least developed area and had the least amount of scholarship. If Black history was to be fully representative and accurate then it was essential that Black women be included." The power of Hine's essay would be evidenced well into the succeeding decades. Assessing its impact, Hine reported years later, "From the perspective of nearly two decades, it is encouraging that in recent years many historians and graduate students have, in fact, taken up the challenges expressed in these early essays." Hine, *Hine Sight*, xxvi-xxvii, 3-39.

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