

Harlem Renaissance



Why Harlem?

- ▣ By 1920, it had become the largest black community in the U.S.
 - Over a quarter of a million African-American residents
- ▣ In N.Y.C., there was greater access to publishers, record companies & theaters
- ▣ N.Y.C.-headquarters of two important civil rights organizations
 - NAACP
 - National Urban League

“New Negro”



- ▣ A term used in the 1920s to describe a generation of Afric.-Amer. who were more politically assertive & proud of their race & culture than previous generations had been.
- ▣ Several historical events contributed to the emergence of the New Negro...

3 Historical Events Contribute to Emergence of the New Negro

- ▣ Nearly 2 million Southern blacks migrated to Northern cities between 1910 & 1930 (Great Migration)
 - ▣ Resulting growth of large urban Afric.-Amer. communities helped to change blacks' view of their relationship to white society
- ▣ WWI-presence of Afric.-Amer. in U.S. fighting forces boosted racial pride & confidence & increased their desire to enjoy the freedoms that the troops had helped fight for in Europe

One more...

- ▣ New political organizations, such as the NAACP & the United Negro Improvement Assoc., were being formed in response to racial violence in the South & prejudice against Afric.-Amer. in the North

Racial Violence 1919

- ▣ During & after WWI, hundreds of thousands of Afric.-Amer. moved to Northern cities
 - Unprepared for this massive influx
 - Afric.-Amer. often encountered blatant discrimination as they sought housing & jobs
 - Finding employment became even more difficult when WWI veterans began to return
 - This volatile situation exploded in 1919
 - ▣ race riots in 25 cities

What did African Americans do to combat racism during the 1920s?

- ▣ NAACP tried to get Congress to protect A.A. from mob violence
 - HoR passed an anti-lynching bill, but bill was never voted on in the Senate
- ▣ NAACP brought racial violence to public's attention through books, articles & protests (lynchings became less frequent)
- ▣ NAACP tried to fight racism through the courts

Why did the Harlem Renaissance end?

- ▣ The soaring optimism proved difficult to sustain
 - Especially when the stock-market crash of 1929 triggered a nationwide economic collapse
 - By 1932, unemployment rate in Harlem reached nearly 50%
 - Many Afric.-Amer. writers & artists lost the financial support of their patrons & moved away from NYC