The Harlem Renaissance and Black Civil Rights

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ABSTRAKT

Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá Harlemskou renesanciou v súvislosti s občianskymi právami černochov. V úvodnej časti sa zaoberá pozadím a možnými príčinami vzniku tohto kultúrneho a sociálneho černošského hnutia, ktoré vyvrcholilo v dvadsiatych rokoch dvadsiateho storočia, vrátane migrácie černochov, priemyselného náboru Prvej svetovej vojny a zvýšenej rasovej diskriminácie. Následne sú uvedené príklady aktívne zapojených černochov v boji za práva, či už lídrov alebo umelcov, a ich prvé pokusy o rovnocennosť v Spojených štátoch.

Kľúčové slová: Harlemská renesancia, občianske práva, Afroameričan, identita, umenie, Spojené štáty americké, Harlem, Jim Crow, segregácia, rasizmus, migrácia, rovnocennosť, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, jazz

ABSTRACT

This bachelor's thesis focuses on the Harlem Renaissance in relation to black civil rights. Firstly, it deals with background and possible causes of this cultural and social African-American movement, which peaked in the 1920s, including the African-American Great Migration, the industrial recruitment of World War I, and increased racial discrimination. Consequently, there are given examples of actively involved African-Americans, whether leaders or artists, in the fight for civil rights and their first attempts to achieve equality in the United States.

Keywords: Harlem Renaissance, civil rights, African-American, identity, art, United States of America, Harlem, Jim Crow, segregation, racism, migration, equality, W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Aaron Douglas, jazz

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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INTRODUCTION

American historian Leon Litwack claims that "the turning point in the relationship of African-Americans to American society" came with World War II.[1] This statement is misleading in its suggestion that American race relations began a U turn after the war. In fact, the war was the second point of a long three-point turn. In the early decades of the twentieth century, during the so-called Jim Crow Era when "separate but equal" was the law of the land, urbanization and industrialization surpassed the rural way of living and farming, overcrowded black neighborhoods became standard, and the lynching of blacks went unpunished. As a result, and with World War I serving as a catalyst, many African-Americans sought better living conditions in the North. This Great Migration brought major social changes. It also led many African-American intellectuals and artists to raise their voices. With hopeful spirit, they began to call for equality and civil rights. Via literature, music and other arts, press publications, and with the help of established organizations, African-Americans managed to really express themselves, and in the process, began to alter the thinking and attitudes of white Americans towards them. It was not until the 1950s and 60s that the Civil Rights Movement successfully petitioned the federal government for legal equality. However, there was a preceding movement, well before World War II, that proved to be influential not only for African-Americans but for all Americans. This movement, the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, set the stage not only for black participation in World War II but also for the Civil Rights Movement to follow. In other words, there might not have been a Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, or Martin Luther King, Jr., without there having first been the Harlem Renaissance, which gave freedom of expression, and a sense of pride, to African-American intellectuals and artists such as W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston.

[1] Leon F. Litwack, "'Fight the Power!' The Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 1 (2009): 5, accessed March 20, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27650400.

1 BACKGROUND

After the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was officially adopted in 1865, black Americans were free. However, this law could not ensure their equality and civil rights. Moreover, it did not alter the attitudes of most whites towards blacks. As a result, the Ku Klux Klan was founded in the South, which used violence and intimidation to ensure black inequality in the face of a Reconstruction-era Republican administration that wanted to both punish white Southerners and help blacks by going against white wishes and providing blacks with opportunities.[2] White Southerners responded to these Republican egalitarian efforts, first with the Black Codes, and then when those were overruled, with Jim Crow legislation. Entrenched racism in the Southern states in the postbellum era served as a motive for blacks to seek appreciation and better living and working conditions in the urban North. This and more led to the Great Migration.

1.1 The Great Migration

For some decades after the Civil War, African-Americans were slowly moving to the North, searching for a better place to live, possibly with less racism, and with hope for better living conditions. In 1900, the population of the United States was 76,094,000, of which 8,833,000 were African-Americans – 11.5 percent of the population. Of these black Americans, 87 percent – 7,923,000 – lived in the South, the border states, and Washington D.C.[3] Between 1900 and 1940, over 1.6 million blacks left the South in favor of the North, the vast majority settling in cities such as of New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, and Detroit.[4] The Great Migration changed not just the lives of African-Americans but the United States as a whole.

Many southern blacks were part of a sharecropping system that emerged during the Reconstruction era. Under this often unfair labor system, blacks could rent land by giving the landowners a percentage of their harvest. Already struggling, an 1898 boll weevil

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[2] "Ku Klux Klan," A&E Networks, accessed March 2, 2017, http://www.history.com/topics/ku-klux-klan.

[3] Sean Dennis Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990* (New York: NYU Press, 1991), 4.

[4] "The Great Migration: The African American Exodus from The South," Priceonomics, accessed March 2, 2017, https://priceonomics.com/the-great-migration-the-african-american-exodus/.

epidemic worsened matters, leaving many black sharecroppers homeless or deeply in debt.[5] Racism, which had increased after the Civil War due to economic competition, only worsened the situation.

Jim Crow laws, which were instituted on a state-by-state basis after 1877, not just in the South but mostly there. These laws required the segregation of public spaces based largely on race, favored whites and often humiliated blacks. With Jim Crow, blacks were relegated to their own sections of parks, cemeteries, libraries, hospitals, theaters, restaurants, buses, trains, and even schools.[6] In 1896, Homer Plessy challenged the Jim Crow laws in Louisiana, on the grounds that the state was violating his constitutional rights by not accommodating him equally. The legal case, known as Plessy vs. Ferguson, went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled against Plessy. With this ruling, the "separate but equal" doctrine became the new law of the land, that is until 1954, when the Supreme Court overturned the decision.[7] These laws were strengthened in the South. One of the reasons is that white southerners did not support the laws passed by Republicans, who were backing blacks. Since the Southerners did not want blacks to be engaged in mainstream society, regulations established on state and local levels disenfranchised them. Poll taxes and literacy tests became prerequisite for voter registration, which effectively prevented many blacks from voting along with a grandfather clause. African-Americans were intimidated by white supremacy groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, which stopped them from protesting the laws. The increased terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan and increased of lynchings, which were de facto legal due to Jim Crow, contributed to the beginning of the Great Migration.[8]

The African-American press played another important part in the Great Migration. Its significant history can be traced back to time when Frederick Douglass and Mary Ann Shadd Carry campaigned against slavery. After the Civil War, the black newspapers became more community-oriented rather than just a voice of activism. In the early

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[5] "Sharecropping," A&E Networks, accessed March 2, 2017, http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/sharecropping.

[6] Leslie V. Tischauser, *Jim Crow Laws* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 1.

[7] Oyez, "Body Politic: Plessy v. Ferguson," Justia Supreme Court Center, accessed February 27, 2017, https://www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/163us537.

[8] Femi Lewis, "What is Jim Crow?" ThoughtCo, accessed March 5, 2017, https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-jim-crow-45387.

twentieth century, the most notable black newspapers were the *California Eagle* and the *Chicago Defender*.[9]

The *Chicago Defender*, established in 1905, used yellow journalism to attract readers with sensational headlines and dramatized news. Images of lynchings and other acts of violence against blacks were often part of the papers. During the Red Summer of 1919, the *Chicago Defender* used the race riots to campaign for anti-lynching laws. The newspaper embraced topics like the enfranchisement of blacks, jobs for everyone, destroying racial prejudice in America, representation in the president's cabinet and in all police departments, government education and trade-unions for everyone, etc. Moreover, the *Chicago Defender* was supportive of the Great Migration and published the train schedules, job listings, various cartoons, articles and editorials to persuade African-Americans to move to the North.[10]

The *California Eagle*, established in 1910, concentrated on helping black migrants to settle in the West by publishing job and housing offers. Besides that, it ran a campaign against discrimination in the motion picture industry. In 1915, when D.W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* was screened in the theaters, the *California Eagle* printed news articles and editorials protesting the film. With help of other newspapers and organizations, *The Birth of a Nation* became tabooed in several communities nationwide.[11]

Although such publications emboldened blacks and helped to increase migration, more influential were the industrial requirements of World War I (1917-1918), during which the Great Migration peaked. A shortage of immigrants from Europe and also the departure of American soldiers to Europe in 1917, produced a labor the shortage. Also the war led to increased demand for industrial products, which were manufactured in the urban North. With new job opportunities came the need for new sources of labor. African-Americans, mostly unskilled laborers, could fill the void. For this reason, Northern companies started recruitment campaigns, in which their biggest goal was to get as many African-Americans as possible to work for them. In consequence, factory managers sent labor recruiters to the

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[9] Femi Lewis, "The Power of the Press: African-American News Publications in the Jim Crow Era," ThoughtCo, accessed March 20, 2017, https://www.thoughtco.com/african-american-news-publications-45389.

[10] Femi Lewis, "Robert Sengstacke Abbot: Publisher of *The Chicago Defender*," ThoughtCo, accessed March 20, 2017, https://www.thoughtco.com/robert-sengstacke-abbott-biography-45296.

[11] "The Power of the Press: African-American News Publications in the Jim Crow Era."

South to bring black Southerners into the Northern urban war industries. As Spencer Crew notes, "Northern companies offered well-paying jobs, free transportation, and low-cost housing as inducements to African-Americans to move north. They also sent labor recruiters into the South who received a fee for every recruit they provided for the company they represented."[12]

African-Americans were moving to the North independently. It was difficult for them to leave the South. Firstly, they had their communities, in which they helped each other cooperate with unfair situations and tough times among the prejudiced whites. Also, it was financially hard to move to the North. Thus, most migrants left the South without their families. After some time, the individuals who left the South were writing letters to their relatives and encouraging them to come to the North, telling them that there are better job opportunities and many advantages of living in the North.

Secondly, the Southern executives tried to slow down the process of migration. Departing trains were searched by local police and African-Americans, who were trying to leave the South, were arrested. They had to figure out how to escape safely. To make it easier, they had to sell their property secretly or just take the minimum with them. Therefore, many migrants had a small amount of money, which could not support them for long, especially in urban settings. And so, after arriving to the North, to find a job became a top priority.

Blacks, as unskilled workers, were mostly employed in low-paid, not quite desirable, and physically demanding positions. For example, they worked in foundries, in the meatpacking companies, in the building trades, or as servants, porters, cooks, cleaners, and doormen. Black women were working in the garment industries, the industrial companies, and packing houses, but mostly they worked as domestic servants. Despite the low wages they had in the North, they were still better paid for the same job than in the South. However, the costs of living in the Northern cities was also higher. Therefore, migrants had another reason for their relatives to come to the North – to help cover expenses. As a result, blacks lived in overcrowded households, with poor sanitation and with inadequate privacy.

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[12] Spencer R. Crew, "The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915-40," United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Monthly Labor Review" (March 1987): 34, accessed February 26, 2017, https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/1987/03/art5full.pdf.

Although they had better paid jobs in the North, much of the income was negated by the higher cost of living.

Despite these unfilled expectations, blacks still saw the future in the North – most of all in education for their children. Southern administrations did not allocate much money for black schools, and so African-American children did not have proper or advanced education. Also, parents were pressured by landowners to put their children to work. As a consequence, just a few children were able to achieve higher levels of education (at high school or university). Moving to the North gave African-Americans many opportunities for their children to be educated and afterwards great hopes for a better future.[13]

1.2 Blacks and World War I

In a time when huge violence was being perpetrated against African-Americans and their lives were negatively affected by Jim Crow laws, they saw an opportunity in World War I and expected progress in endorsed policies towards black people, true democracy, and respect from whites. Many blacks, however, remained hesitant to support this idea and considered it hypocritical. The black editors of *The Messenger* (political and literary magazine for African-Americans) even urged blacks against the war. But the black political leader and activist W.E.B. DuBois encouraged blacks to fight with the belief that when they sacrificed themselves in the war for the nation, the government would award blacks with equal civil rights. Also, wartime was a great chance for African-Americans to prove that they are good leaders and capable, courageous, loyal fighters.[14] Over 200,000 African-Americans crossed the Atlantic and served in France. However, the armed services were segregated. Out of 200,000 roughly 40,000 black troops served in two combat units, the 92nd and the 93rd infantry divisions. Others served mostly in service units, in low positions on the French docks and in port cities like Bordeaux, Brest and others. Later, the 93rd unit was assigned to the French army. Its 369th infantry regiment was from New York and became popularly nicknamed the "Harlem Hellfighters." They introduced jazz music to a French nation spellbound by black culture. Two soldiers of the 369th became the first American soldiers who received the French Croix de Guerre. French people treated African-Americans with respect, unlike the white American soldiers. Blacks experienced

[13] Crew, "The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915-40," 34-36.
[14] Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 35-40.

different attitude towards them also from civilians. France was seen as a nation of democracy, equality, and without any racial discrimination. Moreover, they often came across soldiers from Africa who served in the French army.[15] Suddenly, blacks had a different look at life itself. They did not know any other way of living, perhaps assuming that the way of life in the United States was right and that they were a lower class of society which is supposed to be treated differently from whites. Furthermore, the war experience enhanced questions of belonging and their identity. After the end of World War I in 1918, African-American soldiers returned home, full of hopes that they won their war for civil rights and equality by fighting in the war. Marching down New York City's Fifth Avenue, through Harlem to 145th Street they were cheered and called heroes. The soldiers brought with them a spirit of hope and increased expectations. Furthermore, African-Americans were going to be much more radical after the war. This new way of thinking among African-Americans represented the idea of the New Negro, which would receive a great deal of attention during the Harlem Renaissance. Black America had developed politically, artistically, and socially like never before,[16] but the postwar era was not as idealistic as blacks hoped it would be.

[15] Chad Williams, "African Americans and World War I," Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, accessed March 5, 2017, http://exhibitions.nypl.org/africanaage/essay-world-war-i.html.

[16] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 55-56.

2 WHITE RESPONSE

After the wartime, while African-Americans were increasingly considering the possibilities of equality, democracy and basic civil rights, thousands of white soldiers returned home from Europe to find out that their previous jobs in factories had been occupied by immigrants or by African-Americans from the rural South. With economic insecurity, racial intolerance increased.[17] Many blacks were dismissed from their jobs and since they were not at the top of industrial hierarchy, they were most hurt by the economic recession of 1920-1921. Job opportunities for them were limited, making employment uncertain. A housing crisis further complicated matters. African-Americans had little other chance but to live in overcrowded black neighborhoods where rents were overpriced. Residential segregation was common. Schools were officially for children of any color, but the segregation in neighborhoods led to black schools that were overcrowded and in older buildings, which generally resulted in a poor education. In addition, during the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, the first Southerner to be elected president since the Civil War, Southern Democrats controlled both houses of Congress, the White House, and the Supreme Court. To "reduce friction," Wilson and his cabinet endorsed segregation in government offices, shops, rest rooms, and lunchrooms, and increased segregation in the civil services. Despite the increasing racism, the North was still a better option for them than the South, where lynching and peonage predominated.[18]

2.1 The Red Summer in 1919

After World War I, race riots spread to the North. In July 1917, East St. Louis witnessed the killing of forty African-Americans. However, 1919 was possibly the worst year for racial violence, as riots broke out in several cities over a short period of time, and not only in the South.[19] Chicago was struggling with postwar unemployment, competition for jobs, and a housing deficit. With this backdrop, whites stoned a young black man to death for violating Jim Crow laws by crossing and invisible line separating white and black

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[17] "The Chicago Race Riot of 1919," A&E Networks, accessed March 5, 2017, http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/chicago-race-riot-of-1919.

[18] Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 286-287; Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*, 25-26.

[19] Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 287.

swimming areas in Lake Michigan.[20] The Chicago Race Riot of 1919 ensued, leaving 15 whites and 23 blacks dead, and over 500 people injured, most of them blacks. Also, a thousand black families became homeless after rioters destroyed their houses.[21] After the war, blacks were apparently more militant and more willing to fight back. The race riots also broke out between April and October in Tennessee, Texas, Nebraska, and Washington, D.C.,[22] prompting the rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan.

2.2 The Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1865 in Pulaski, Tennessee. Its name is derived the from Greek word "kuklos," meaning circle.[23] As mentioned earlier, the initial aim of the Klan was to fight Reconstruction-era policies, which favored freedpeople. Blacks participating in public life, and winning public offices triggered the Klan's underground campaign of violence against Republican voters and civic leaders in an effort to overturn Radical Reconstruction policies and reinstate white supremacy in the South. By 1870, the Klan had branches in almost every southern state. Klan members wore characteristic uniforms - white long robes and hoods, mostly during night raids.[24] In 1871, the Klan was broken as an organization by the Ku Klux Klan Act, which authorized President Ulysses S. Grant to suspend the writ of habeas corpus to suppress the Klan and any other white supremacy organization.[25] However, the Klan would return.

In 1915, director D.W. Griffith produced a silent three-hour-long film, crucial to the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, called *The Birth of a Nation*. The film is based on *The Clansman,* a 1905 novel by Thomas Dixon. The film achieved remarkable success among audience, even in the White House, where it was the first ever screened there. President Woodrow Wilson, a historian, praised it as "like writing history with lighting." Although the movie is a landmark in terms of cinema, it is also considered controversial, mostly for its support of white supremacy. Because of its content, it is viewed as one of the most racist

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[20] Cameron McWhirter, "Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America," *Chicago Tribune*, accessed March 6, 2017, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-11-18/entertainment/sc-ent-books-red-summer-mcwhirter-20111118_1_black-labor-black-people-racial-violence.

[21] "The Chicago Race Riot of 1919."

[22] "Red Summer: The Summer of 1919 and the Awakening of Black America;" Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 287.

[23] Sara Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence* (Montgomery: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011), 9.

[24] "Ku Klux Klan."

American movies ever.[26] The storyline is halved into the Civil War era and the postwar Reconstruction era. It portrays the story of two families, one from the Union, and one from the Confederacy. In the first part the Union army, with its black troops is portrayed negatively, unlike the Confederate military, which is illustrated as heroic. The second part gives an insight into the lives of Southerners during the Reconstruction era. There is a memorable scene, in which Gus, a freed black man (played by a white actor with blackface make-up, because due to Jim Crow segregation, blacks were not allowed to act in the same films as whites), was lynched by the Ku Klux Klan and delivered to the doorstep of the lieutenant governor because he wanted to rape a white woman who rather killed herself than marry him. The Klan members are glorified, and portrayed as society's saviors, mostly for protecting white women from black animal lust. The film also portrays freedman as being interested in, above all, intermarriage, and who were quick to use to intimidate white women into sexual relationships.[27] According to historian Paul Gilroy, the film presents the Klan "as a kind of cleansing force, brushing aside the chaos, and destructiveness of the blacks who have been brought into the political process."[28]

The Birth of a Nation influenced William J. Simmons to use it as a tool to rekindle the Ku Klux Klan. He was familiar with its advertising importance, and used it to attract as many people to the organization as possible.[29] Still, the organization grew slowly until 1920, when Simmons promised two publicists an 80 percent commission on new member fees. These promoters helped the Klan to create a successful recruitment system. The Klan started to stand against immigrants, bootleggers, African-Americans, Jews, Asians, Catholics, and promiscuous sex. The supposed moral threats posed by various ethnic minorities prompted white Protestants to join the organization in mass.[30] Because of secrecy of the Klan, the actual number of members is uncertain, however, the estimate is that between 1920 and 1925 it surpassed five million. The Ku Klux Klan was strongest in the South, Southwest, and Midwest. It also controlled some states politically. It was

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[25] Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 15.

[26] Ibid., 21; Tom Brook, "*The Birth of a Nation*: The Most Racist Movie Ever Made?," BBC, accessed March 8, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20150206-the-most-racist-movie-ever-made.

[27] *The Birth of a Nation*, directed by David W. Griffith (1915; Los Angeles: Epoch), video.

[28] "Paul Gilroy on *The Birth of a Nation*," YouTube, accessed March 8, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79sJjKG-VMo.

[29] Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 21.

[30] Ibid., 17.

assumed that the Klan was mainly a rural organization fighting against urban forces. But the organization was also dominant in cities like Los Angeles, Detroit, Chicago, Denver, Dallas, and Atlanta.[31] In Chicago, a city with large immigrant and African-American populations, the Klan, rallying under the motto "one hundred percent Americanism," demanded the purification of politics and offered the assistance of white Protestant Americans in returning law and order to the city. However, this appeal was outweighed by the strong ethnic political presence in the city. The same went for other cities, like New York, Buffalo, Detroit, and Pittsburgh.[32] Before the Klan could mount a successful ideological attack in the urban north, the Great Depression undermined the Klan, as whites could not afford their membership fees or fell behind in their annual dues. By the end of the depression in 1944, the Klan was insolvent.[33]

The Klan with its activities and propagation encouraged the increase of racism, which sparked violence towards minorities in the first half of the twentieth century. Numerous lynchings and race riots resulted in the deaths of many African-Americans. These events aroused intellectuals, civil right activists, as well as artists, to express their anger against and dissatisfaction with the injustice. At the same time they empowered black pride, encouraged blacks to fight for their rights, and attempted to show whites that blackness is not a mark of degradation after all. Despite the Klan being at peak power in the 1920s, African-Americans became more militant, self-confident, and determined to change their position on the social ladder.

[31] Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 236.
[32] Ibid., 239.
[33] Bullard, *Ku Klux Klan*, 23.

3 BLACK RESPONSE

While the numbers of African-Americans moving to the North were growing, some black intellectuals started to raise their voices for civil rights. In the early 1900s, African-Americans activist and leaders were struggling between a longing for integration and a longing for self-determination. Despite the lack of education for black children in the country, some of them, mostly middle class, managed to become highly educated and take up leadership positions within the black community. They also had the support of a liberal white minority. These allies, who shared a belief in human equality, became the driving force for organizations formed in the first decades of the twentieth century, such as the Niagara Movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the purpose of which was to remove barriers of racial discrimination in the United States.[34] In the late 1910s, spurred by hopeful voices, a new cultural era for African-Americans started to form. Black writers, musicians, painters, and other artists gathered together to express their black pride through the arts. This movement, at first known as the New Negro Movement, later came to be called became the Harlem Renaissance.

3.1 The "New Negro" voices

The "New Negro" term was popularized by Alain Locke, when he gathered together various poems, stories, essays, and pictures in *The New Negro* (1925). The New Negro represents the desire of many African-Americans, not just artists and intellectuals, to break free of the stereotypes that weighed them down. It started with a change in attitude that stemmed from adaptation to urbanity.[35] Nevertheless, leadership was important.

Booker T. Washington was born a slave in Virginia, in 1856. After the war freed him, he studied at Hampton Institute, and after at Wayland Seminary. In 1881, he became principal of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, a job that propelled him into a leadership position within African-American community. In 1895 in Atlanta, in what is now referred to as his "Compromise Speech," Washington accepted racial segregation, noting that whites and black could be "in all things social … as separate as the fingers, yet one as the

[34] Richard T. Schaefer, *Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Society* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2008), 24-25.

[35] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 56-57.

hand in all things essential to mutual progress."[36] He told black to be patient and compliant and to temporarily accept segregation and disenfranchisement. In the meantime, he stressed the need for black to improve their economic situation, so that when the time for equality came, they would have the financial means to embrace it.[37] With this compromise, he comforted white Southerners and became their poster boy for Jim Crow era race relations. However, northern intellectuals, both white and black, heavily criticized him, with one civil rights leader referring to him as a "skulking coward".[38]

W. E. B. DuBois was one such black activist who criticized Washington's leadership. Born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1868 (after the end of slavery), he graduated from Fisk University, Harvard University, and attended the University of Berlin. After returning from Europe, he taught at Wilberforce University and then at Atlanta University. DuBois became nationally recognized after his publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), in which, inter alia, he supported classical education and argued against Washington's idea that blacks should receive only vocational education. DuBois was convinced that the acceptance of racial segregation and disfranchisement would not move African-Americans forward but would keep them at the bottom of the American social ladder. Later, DuBois provided vital leadership for African-Americans, and he remained a fervent supporter of a liberal arts education, as he believed it supported equality.[39]

In July 1905, DuBois and other opponents of Washington's compromise established the Niagara Movement, the platform of which included vocal protests against "the abridgment of political and civil rights and against inequality of educational opportunity." Although the Niagara Movement lasted only seven years,[40] it revived the agitation of abolitionists to end racial discrimination and segregation, to enfranchise blacks, and ensure equal opportunities for all races.

Unceasing racism, strong segregation in the South, and increasing numbers of lynchings alarmed former white abolitionists. In 1908, a white woman in Springfield, Illinois, claimed that she had been raped by black man. A white mob descended on the city's black neighborhood, burning houses, lynching two African-Americans, and beating

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[36] Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*, 13-14.
[37] Ibid., 14.
[38] Ibid., 16-17.
[39] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 18-19; Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 289.
[40] Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*, 18.

several others. In response, a white Southern Socialist, William English Walling, wrote an angry article calling for the "true spirit of abolitionists, of Lincoln and Lovejoy…to treat the Negro on a plane of absolute political and social equality."[41] Shortly afterwards, white educators, Socialists, former abolitionists, believers in racial equality, and former members of the Niagara Movement met in New York and formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Its goal was "equal rights and opportunities for all." To challenge racial discrimination, litigation and education became its characteristic approach.[42]

During its first decade, the NAACP established numerous branches and increased the circulation of their magazine *The Crisis*, edited by W.E.B. Dubois, to a hundred thousand. Along with publications like the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Baltimore African-American*, they intended to educate blacks about their national responsibilities, about politics, and to encourage them to take action in order to achieve equality and not to be satisfied with the status quo. During the Harlem Renaissance, *The Crisis* became one of the main publications printing short stories and poems by black authors who contributed to the genuine voice of African-Americans.[43]

The NAACP engaged in court battles. For instance, in the legal case of Guinn v. United States decided in 1915, officials responsible for a grandfather clause in Oklahoma, which prevented African-Americans from voting, were accused by the NAACP of violating the Fifteenth Amendment. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, which declared the clause to be unconstitutional.[44]

As the voice of American blacks, the NAACP also reacted to the groundbreaking motion picture - *The Birth of a Nation*. In Boston, a theater refused to sell tickets for the movie to blacks, and great amount of money was invested in bribing police to threaten blacks. Moreover, in the theatre, the white audience received blank endorsement cards that they could fill out and turn in during intermission. With growing outrage, in order to defend blacks, the NAACP leaders started to speak out against the film. The Boston branch

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[41] Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Black: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue: The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 12.

[42] Ibid., 13.

[43] Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*, 22; Femi Lewis "4 Publications of the Harlem Renaissance," ThoughtCo, accessed March 15, 2017, https://www.thoughtco.com/four-publications-of-the-harlem-renaissance-45158.

[44] Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990*, 22-23.

of the NAACP protested the film and demanded it be banned or censored.[45] In 1915, DuBois credited the film for an increase in lynchings and labeled the film as "vicious propaganda." Ultimately, thanks in part to the efforts of the NAACP, the film was banned in several northern cities. With this victory and others, the popularity of the NAACP increased, and by the end of the decade, it had eighty thousand members.[46]

In July 1917, the NAACP organized a silent protest parade in New York City. The parade was the first large-scale civil rights protest of African-Americans. Shortly after the race riots in East St. Louis occurred, the Harlem branch of the NAACP discussed a method of protest against it. DuBois and activist James Weldon Johnson, who was elected head of the branch in 1920 and who would become an important figure of the Harlem Renaissance, proposed a silent protest. Johnson formed a parade committee, which included church pastors and black civic leaders, in order to reach as many African-American New Yorkers as possible. Ultimately, ten thousand blacks marched silently down New York's Fifth Avenue to the sound of drums. Black children and women dressed in white were in the front, followed by men carrying banners and placards that expressed their righteous indignation.[47] The NAACP listed several mottoes of the parade in the flyer, objecting to oppressive behavior towards blacks, for example:

"Thou shalt not kill."

"We are maligned as lazy, and murdered when we work."

"Color, blood and suffering have made us one."

"We have fought for the liberty of white Americans in six wars; our reward is East St. Louis."[48]

The silent protest parade was remarkable for that time, but it was just one of the educational, cultural, and legislative activities of the NAACP. Although the leaders' efforts to change legislation often failed, the organization made significant progress towards black

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[45] "Fighting a Vicious Film: Protest against *The Birth of a Nation*," National Humanities Center, accessed March 15, 2017, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/forward/text4/viciousfilm.pdf.

[46] Dorian Lynskey, "How the Fight to Ban *The Birth of a Nation* Shaped the Nascent Civil Rights Movement," Slate, accessed March 17, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/history/2015/03/the_birth_of_a_nation_how_the_fight_to_censor_d_w_griffith_s_film_shaped.html.

[47] Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance: K-Y* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 751-752.

[48] "The Negro Silent Protest Parade," National Humanities Center, accessed March 25, 2017, https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai2/forward/text4/silentprotest.pdf.

civil rights and contributed to a new African-Americans era, in which their confidence and self-expression increased.

Besides the NAACP, the Committee on Urban Conditions among Negroes was formed in 1910 in New York City, later to become the National Urban League. Its initial aim was to help black migrants find jobs and accommodation in the North, where racial discrimination led to poor living conditions. For the first two decades, the Urban League focused more on black social matters, but it later also became involved in civil rights.[49]

Marcus Garvey, Jamaican-born, preferred a more radical approach than the leaders of the NAACP. In 1917, Garvey established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Harlem, to brace black people up, not just in the United States but worldwide. After World War I, he managed to attract hundred of thousands of people into his organization, which became the largest black organization in African-American history. Garvey led black people to self-determination, self-respect, and preached Pan-Africanism. His effort to colonize the African continent with African Americans, however, fell short. DuBois heavily criticized his effort and his appreciation for Booker T. Washington's concepts. In the UNIA's newspaper *Negro World*, Garvey criticized other black leaders for trying to worm into the favor of whites, and he encouraged blacks to adjust to white domination via self-segregation. He envisioned a separate black nation in Africa, but he did not have the wherewithal to make it happen. Moreover his shady business deals, meetings with the Ku Klux Klan (who liked his idea of black leaving America), disagreements with government officials in Liberia, and ultimately his imprisonment for mail fraud led to the decline of the UNIA.[50] Even so, for a time, Garvey united blacks and fostered racial pride among them.

3.2 Blooming of Harlem

As the Great Migration was for southern African-Americans a great opportunity a for better life, it was also an opportunity for many black writers, artists, and musicians to seek an appreciation among whites. Nevertheless, segregation occured not only in the South. The struggle with discrimination, poverty, and housing in the Northern cities led blacks to

[49] "Mission and History," National Urban League, accessed March 25, 2017, http://nul.iamempowered.com/who-we-are/mission-and-history.

[50] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 41-47.

flock together in the often overcrowded neighborhoods. One of the largest neighborhoods was Harlem in New York City.

Harlem is a part of Manhattan, north of Central Park. In the nineteenth century, Harlem was built-up with luxury apartment buildings, churches and synagogues, clubs, rails and broad avenues. In that time, it was occupied by the white middle-class. In 1905, worried developers started to sell or rent underpriced houses to African-Americans. Growing numbers of black migrants from the South and development of black neighborhoods displaced the overpopulated black communities already settled in the west section of Manhattan to the North into Harlem. Whites began to depart, prompting housing prices to drop, and Harlem became more affordable for blacks. Between 1914 and 1930, the black population of Harlem grew by about one hundred thousand. By 1920, Harlem became the center of black American culture, a socially, economically and ethnically diverse community, which, with the help of leaders like W.E.B. DuBois, James Weldon Johnson, and Marcus Garvey attracted more migrants. Harlem developed into a center of African-American literature, music, and art, as well as an entertainment center for whites, who sought out its jazz music, clubs and theaters. The new social, artistic, and cultural movement known alternatively as the New Negro movement, the Negro Renaissance, the Jazz Age, or the Harlem Renaissance bloomed in the Roaring 20s.[51]

3.3 The "New Negro" artists

Writers, musicians and visual artists, as well as middle-class leaders who were mostly politically engaged, had the power to promote change. As historian Nathan Irvin Huggins noted, artists "saw art and letters as a bridge across the chasm between the races."[52] The works of black writers were important tools in forming a racial identity. In the times of Jim Crow, blacks had a need to define themselves within American society.[53] The significant figures of the Harlem Renaissance and selected examples of their works, which reflect the situation in the early decades of the twentieth century and planted the seeds, from which

[51] Cary D. Wintz, "The Harlem Renaissance: What Was It, and Why Does It Matter?" Humanities Texas, accessed March 1, 2017, http://www.humanitiestexas.org/news/articles/harlem-renaissance-what-was-it-and-why-does-it-matter.

[52] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 5.

[53] Ibid., 138-39.

the Black Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s sprouted, are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1 Literature of the Harlem Renaissance

One of the most significant writers of the Harlem Renaissance was Langston Hughes. Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902 to a dysfunctional family. As a result, he moved around a lot, also living in Illinois and Mexico. In 1921, he attended Columbia University in New York. The same year, he met W.E.B. DuBois and Harlem poet Countee Cullen, and published his first poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," in *Crisis* magazine. He left the university after one year but continued to write for *Crisis*. After spending some time in Africa and Europe, Hughes returned to Harlem in 1924. Influenced by jazz music, he began to write poems in its syncopated rhythm. In 1926, Alfred A. Knopf, a white publisher, printed his book of poetry *The Weary Blues*. In 1929, he graduated from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. His first novel, *Not without Laughter* (1930), was awarded the Harmon Foundation Medal for literature.[54] Hughes together with Zora Neale Hurston, Helene Johnson, Wallace Thurman and others, established a journal, *Fire!!,* the purpose of which was to express the new attitudes of African-Americans through art.[55] Although recognized mostly as a poet, Hughes also authored novels, autobiographies, books for young people, short stories, sketches, plays, photo essays, scripts for television and radio, lyrics for musicals and operas, recordings, and several articles. Writing about racial themes and oppression, as well as controversial themes such as prostitution and teenage pregnancy, but, all in a realistic way, he called attention to the history of blacks, both in the United States and in Africa. This realism attracted both black and white audience. Also, he insisted on the equal participation of blacks in U.S. politics.[56]

His poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" has been frequently published as a typical example of his work. It points to the importance of ancestries and the way they contribute to the meaning in life. Readers can find this connection in symbols like rivers, veins, and

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[54] "Hughes's Life and Career," Modern American Poetry, accessed March 25, 2017, http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/g_l/hughes/life.htm.

[55] Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 164.

[56] Mothe Prashant Subhash, "Violation of Human Rights of the Negro's in the Poems of Langston Hughes: A Critical Perspective," *Asia Pacific Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research* 1, no. 1 (March, 2012): 143-147, accessed March 25, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1426262151?accountid=15518.

other timeless objects. He shaped a dual meaning for this racial theme in terms of wisdom and tradition.[57] Hughes's compelling essay, "The Negro Artist and Racial Mountain" was a solicited response to George S. Schuyler's "Negro-Art Hokum," in which Hughes argues that black art is not "hokum" but authentic. In it, he contends that black artists should escape the middle-class trap of aspiring to whiteness and should not be scared of their own racial identity.[58] Hughes encourages black poets to write in their own way, and embrace black uniqueness. He ends his essay with the following statement:

> "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual darkskinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too. The tom-tom cries and the tom-tom laughs. If colored people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."[59]

Langston Hughes continued working well into the 1960s and was one of the most well-respected influential black writers of the Civil Rights Movement.

James Weldon Johnson, educator, novelist, poet, lawyer, songwriter, musician, journalist, diplomat, civil rights leader, and politician was another important figure of the early-twentieth century. Born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1871, he was attracted to education from a young age. He learned to play guitar and became fluent in Spanish language. After his studies at Atlanta University, he returned to Jacksonville, where he taught and served as a principal at a segregated school. Meanwhile, he studied law, and after he passed the bar in 1897, he moved to New York City in 1902 with his brother. In New York, they wrote numerous songs and a musical together. As he was active in Republican Party politics, he was rewarded with diplomatic posts in Venezuela and Nicaragua. During this time, he wrote his book *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* anonymously. In 1912, he returned to New York City and became involved in the NAACP's activities, where he was appointed as an executive secretary.[60] Johnson's

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[57] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 66-67.

[58] Laurie F. Leach, *Langston Hughes: A Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), 36-37.

[59] Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, vol. 122 (June23, 1926), 692.

[60] "Dedication: James Weldon Johnson 1871-1938," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 18 (1997): 1, accessed March 27, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2998717.

Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man reflects the struggle of blacks with their identity. He portrays a black man who is musician and decides to become white because he is embarrassed of the helplessness of African-Americans. He gives up music and becomes successful as a businessman. After the death of his beloved white woman, who bore his two children, he is left ambivalent and with feelings of guilt. Johnson saw the failure in society as the loss of cultural fusion that might have been achievable through talented individuals and their characteristics, which do not depend on race.[61] His 1934 book *Negro Americans, What Now?* is addressed to African-Americans. In it, he introduces numerous possible choices for blacks. He rejects the idea of exodus, criticizes the usage of physical force, and has no understanding of fixing blacks' problems within communism. Also, there are mentioned varieties of voluntary self-segregation, the policy of integration, and the acceptance of the black race as a minority seeking to be culturally and economically capable. Johnson finally suggests the creation of an organization, which would take certain actions towards common interests of all races, and would be cooperative in order to ensure democracy in the country.[62] James Weldon Johnson made a significant impact on society, when whites and blacks agreed on his belief that racial tensions could be overstepped by artists.[63]

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Alabama in 1891, but her family moved to Eatonville, Florida when she was very young. Her childhood was marked by the death of her mother, and living with other members of the family when her father remarried. She struggled with education finances, and worked as a maid to support herself. Ultimately, she succeeded in earning an anthropology degree from Columbia University. In the 1920s, she moved to Harlem and became part of its movement, meeting with Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen and other contemporaries. Her works were published in the *Opportunity,* an academic journal issued by National Urban League. After returning from Florida, where she collected African-American folk material, she later published a collection of folk tales, *Mules and Men* (1935). In the 1930s, she worked with Langston Hughes on play *Mule-Bone: A Comedy of Negro Life,* and wrote numerous other plays. In 1936, Hurston traveled to Haiti,

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[61] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance,* 144-145.

[62] Robert E. Park, "Review: *Negro Americans, What Now?* by James Weldon Johnson," *American Journal of Sociology* 40, no. 6 (1935): 837-38, accessed March 27, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768353.

[63] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance,* 118.

where she studied voodoo, and then to Jamaica, where she was in charge of anthropology research. During the trip to Haiti she wrote her well-known novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937).[64] Her works are rather folklore-oriented than political. In that time, most black male authors criticized her novel for not being political and not illustrating the harsh consequences of racism. Nowadays, it is considered to be her best work for being traditional. For the last decades of her life, she struggled to get published and had financial problems. Nevertheless, she greatly contributed to the Harlem Renaissance literature, writing about African-American folklore, mostly set in the rural environment in the South, and helped to define black culture. Hurston died indigent and alone in 1960.[65]

Jamaican Claude McKay, a militant and race-conscious poet and writer, was born in 1889. As a young boy, he lived with his brother, a teacher, so he could get a good education. He devoted himself to poetry and met with Englishman Walter Jekyll, who became his mentor. His first books of dialect verse, *Songs of Jamaica* (1912) and *Constab Ballads* (1912) were published by the time McKay moved to the United States, where he studied at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, then at Kansas State College, and for the first time truly experienced racism. In 1914, he settled in Harlem. His next two poems were published under a pseudonym in 1917. *The Liberator*, a socialist journal, became essential for his career along with *Pearson's Magazine*.[66] *The Liberator* published his best-known poem, "If We Must Die" during the "Red Summer of 1919," which McKay wrote as a respond to race riots, and to encourage blacks to fight back and stand up for themselves. In this poem, he uplifts the militant character of the "New Negro," although he claimed that the poem was written for all people who suffered abuse and not just for blacks.[67] In the 1920s, he wrote several poems and novels. *Harlem Shadows* (1922) is one of his most significant poem collections. His fictional novel, *Home to Harlem* (1928), portrays the authentic atmosphere of Harlem and its intense nightlife full of music, dance, alcohol, drugs, and sex. The novel was well received and was the first fictional novel written by an

[64] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 74-75; "Zora Neale Hurston Biography," A&E Television Networks, accessed March 30, 2017, http://www.biography.com/people/zora-neale-hurston-9347659.

[65] "Zora Neale Hurston is Born," A&E Networks, accessed March 30, 2017, http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/zora-neale-hurston-is-born.

[66] Freda Scott Giles, "McKay, Claude," American National Biography Online, accessed April 5, 2017, http://www.anb.org/articles/16/16-01105.html.

[67] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 71-72.

African-American to become a best-seller.[68] During the Great Depression he left the United States and lived in Europe and Morocco, but he became a U.S. citizen upon his return. In 1940, he wrote *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, in which he comments on the African-American community in Harlem. McKay moved to Chicago in his later years, where he died of a heart attack in 1948.[69] Despite the fact McKay traveled most of the time during the 1920s, he was an important and influential figure of the Harlem Renaissance.

Countee Cullen, raised by his grandmother and later, after her death in 1918, taken into a reverend's home in Harlem, became a representative voice of the Harlem Renaissance. In high school, he won prizes for poetry, earned academic honors, and was elected vice-president of his class. After high school graduation, he enrolled at New York University. Cullen won prizes in the national Witter Bynner undergraduate poetry contest, and other contests with his poem "The Ballad of the Brown Girl" in 1925. In that year, he graduated from New York University, entered Harvard University, and published *Color*, his first collection of poems. This volume was most significant for the Harlem Renaissance. The paradox came along with his idea of colorblind poetry and writing. In a newspaper article, he suggested that black writers censor their works by omitting details of black life, so as not to destroy contemporary efforts at relieving racial tension. Also, he urged Hughes to not use jazz rhythms in his works and to not be a racial writer. Cullen's intention was to write traditional poetry and to show whites that blacks could do it. The ultimate goal was to overcome racial tension via colorblind art. At the same time, however, even Cullen could not escape racial themes in his own poems. Pan-Africanism and Négritude can be found in "Atlantic City Waiter," while "Heritage" implies a concurrent dedication to America and anger at its racial injustice. In his poem "Incident," he expresses his anger for being called "nigger" on a bus. "Yet Do I Marvel" also expresses his anger at racial unfairness. His poetry also deals with Christianity and paganism in combination with racial themes. For example, in "Black Christ" the lynching of a black man is compared to the crucifixion of

[68] Ibid., 118-126.

[69] "Claude McKay Biography," A&E Television Networks, accessed April 4, 2017, http://www.biography.com/people/claude-mckay-9392654.

Christ. Ultimately, Cullen, despite his stated intentions, came just as close as DuBois and Johnson to representing the "New Negro."[70]

Black writers, mostly middle-class and educated, struggled to define their own identity. They often tried to come closer to white Americans, and at the same time they embraced their uniqueness with characteristic, traditional, and folk writing. Either way, they managed to reflect difficult times through literary works, react to them, and bring black culture and struggles against discrimination to the attention of the mainstream public.

3.3.2 Music of the Harlem Renaissance

Jazz and some of its representatives like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, or even the white leader of the first integrated jazz band Benny Goodman are linked to the 1950-60s Civil Rights Movement. They used music as a tool to promote racial equality and justice.[71] Also, music was another important art form by which African-Americans expressed themselves, in an attempt to bridge the social gap between blacks and whites. The gospels, works songs, and field hollers of slaves evolved into ragtime, blues and jazz. Black music, jazz particularly, struggled to gain popularity and acceptance during the Harlem Renaissance. It was distinctive. Except for by Hughes, it was not respected by Harlem intellectuals, who deemed it lower class. Ultimately, they were forced to admit its significant role in American culture.[72]

Jazz is characterized by syncopated rhythms, improvisation, call and response vocals, and blue notes which reflects African-American experiences.[73] It originated in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. Due to Jim Crow laws, black musicians performed jazz in brothels, dance clubs, and bars in Storyville, the red-light district of New Orleans, as they could not perform music in more decent institutions like their white contemporaries. In 1917, the US Navy closed the district because of fear for sailors' health. After the closure, the black musicians moved to northern cities, where jazz's styles locally

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[70] "Countee Cullen," Poetry Foundation, accessed April 10, 2017, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/countee-cullen#poet; Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 210-211.

[71] Michael Verity, "How Jazz Musicians Spoke Out for Racial Equality," accessed April 15, 2017, https://www.thoughtco.com/jazz-and-the-civil-rights-movement-2039542.

[72] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 64.

[73] Smithsonian Institute, "What is Jazz?" National Museum of American History, accessed April 15, 2017, http://americanhistory.si.edu/smithsonian-jazz/education/what-jazz.

developed. In the same year, an *all-white* music group, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, made the first jazz records, which brought jazz to nationwide audience.[74]

Jazz features were new and different from European classical music. Jazz's recognition grew along with efforts to censor it. During the Harlem Renaissance between 1917 and 1930, many racially and politically-motivated white jazz critics expressed their aversion to jazz in order to show hate towards African-Americans. They perceived jazz as a form of bayou voodoo, savage, obscene, unhealthy, and even dangerous. In the articles, jazz was linked with Africa and slavery, its rhythmic music described as "delirium" and "without melody," and jazz musicians as "savage," "aggressive," and "retarded."[75] Such attributes ran parallel to the stereotypical black man's portrayal in the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*. Black musicians replied to these insults, praising jazz as serious music and then defending blacks by referencing their and loyalty during World War I. Jazz somewhat fell out of favor during the Red Summer of 1919, but during the 1920s jazz became popular nationwide, especially in New York, Chicago, and cities along the Mississippi River.[76]

With the coming of the Prohibition era in 1920, jazz moved into speakeasies, which served liquor and employed black musicians. Although jazz was strongly criticized, young audiences, both black and white, embraced it. Whites found Harlem clubs exotic, as they were often decorated with jungle motifs, filled with jazz music and strange new dances, and offering alcohol, drugs, and sex. That which was prohibited was desired. For the first time since the seventeenth century in America, whites socially mingled with blacks and Jim Crow was partially subverted.[77] Harlem's most popular cabaret was the Cotton Club. This club, unlike others, provided black entertainment only for white wealthy customers, which made it exclusive but also segregated. Nevertheless, between 1923 and 1935, it launched the careers of many black musicians like Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway, and Fletcher Henderson. For example, Ellington and his Orchestra earned nationwide popularity through

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[74] "The Devils's Music: 1920s Jazz," PBS, accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/beyond/jazz.html.

[75] Maureen Anderson, "The White Reception of Jazz in America," *African American Review* 38, no. 1 (2004): 135-36, accessed April 15, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1512237.

[76] Ibid., 136-45.

[77] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 89-92; "Speakeasies, Flappers & Red Hot Jazz: Music of the Prohibition," Stanford University, accessed April 18, 2017, http://riverwalkjazz.stanford.edu/program/speakeasies-flappers-red-hot-jazz-music-prohibition.

weekly radio broadcasting, which was several times recorded on albums. Black music moved from the nightclubs to households and became known among the general public.[78]

The Apollo Theater, located in Harlem, opened in the 1910s as a burlesque venue. After a campaign against burlesque in the early 1930s, the theater changed owners and re-opened with a new format of the shows featuring music, dance, theater, and comedy. The Apollo focus its marketing on the growing African-American population in Harlem. The theatre, with its live performances became a main entertainment venue in Harlem, which helped black music increase in popularity. Musicians like Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and others started their careers there during the last years of the Harlem Renaissance.[79]

Jazz also appeared in the all-black-produced musical *Shuffle Along* (1921), written by Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles. Noble Sissle's and Eubie Blake's music and dancing made the musical new, inspiring, and bold. Langston Hughes saw it as a crucial point in the rise of the Harlem Renaissance. The show became successful and created a demand for more. Other musicals were produced during the 1920s like *Strut Miss Lizzie*, *Seven-Eleven*, *Dixie to Broadway*, *Runnin' Wild*, *Hot Chocolates*, and others. These musicals spread black music and new dance styles like the Charleston, the Cakewalk, and Black Bottom among the general public, and also launched the careers of many black talents. However, the black musicals did not manage to cultivate black theatrical arts. The pressures to replicate a mainstream (white) theatrical voice and to achieve commercial success pulled black performers away from ethnic theater.[80]

Despite struggles during the Harlem Renaissance, black music and its uniqueness attracted whites and became an essential part of Roaring Twenties entertainment. Even though jazz did not originate in Harlem, its influence and expression during the era were strong there, helping black earn appreciation, understanding, and further equality. Jazz became a characteristic part of African-American culture as well as part of American culture itself. In later years, jazz musicians cooperated with activists and contributed to the

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[78] "Cotton Club in Harlem (1923-)," BlackPast, accessed April 20, 2017. http://www.blackpast.org/aah/cotton-club-harlem-1923.

[79] "Apollo Theater History," Apollo Theater, accessed April 20, 2017, https://www.apollotheater.org/about/history/.

[80] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 286-291, Cary D. Wintz, "The Harlem Renaissance: What Was It, and Why Does It Matter?"

argument over racial inequalities in the music industry. During the civil rights era, Jazz was linked with writers, who were politically engaged and "turned to jazz as the primary musical site for political expression."[81]

3.3.3 Visual arts of the Harlem Renaissance

Black visual arts emerged later but with the same power as literature and music. During the 1920s and 1930s, black painters and sculptors tried to include Africanisms and primitive themes in their work. The Harmon Foundation, an important catalyst, provided the funding and the exhibits of African-American art in Harlem. The effects of Harlem's visual arts were felt nationwide, even in Europe, mostly in Paris, in which artists often studied. Integrative cooperation of Harlem Renaissance artists was typical. For instance, artists illustrated books by literati Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, or James Weldon Johnson. Aaron Douglas, the most significant painter of the Harlem Renaissance, drafted covers for black journals such as *The Crisis, Fire!!,* and *Opportunity*.[82]

Douglas, born in Kansas in 1898, studied fine arts at the University of Nebraska, and taught art in Kansas City. In 1925, he moved to New York, where he, with the encouragement of his teacher Winold Reiss, who was famous for his folk drawing, developed a distinctive technique of painting, which included African concepts. His work, in which he represented African-American life and history, attracted Harlem writers, for whom he illustrated their books, for example Johnson's *God's Trombones,* or McKay's *Home to Harlem*. Aaron Douglas became a leading figure with his combination of aesthetics with traditional African art, and with the utilization of racial themes. During the 1930s, Douglas created several significant murals for establishments and companies. *Jazz and Jungle* was created for the Club Ebony in Harlem, but the most famous were four murals *Aspects of Negro Life* (1934) created for the Schomburg Center in Harlem with WPA (Works Progress Administration – a New Deal agency) funding. WPA funded also Charles Alston's mural *Magic and Medicine* with African natural motif for the Harlem Hospital. Douglas's murals, however, symbolize four key points in African-American

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[81] Matt Sakakeeny, "Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa," *Music Library Association. Notes* 65, no. 4 (06, 2009): 770-772, accessed April 21, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/196763375?accountid=15518.

[82] Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman*, Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance: A-J* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 46-50.

history, from the African setting, to slavery and the Reconstruction era, then through segregation and lynchings to the Great Migration and the Harlem Renaissance in the industrial setting of the Great Depression.[83] Douglas wanted to emotionally impact viewers. Through his work, he tried to embody the "spiritual identity"[84] of blacks, as he believed that "art and culture … can be the bridge between peoples."[85]

Jacob Lawrence, another painter of the Harlem Renaissance, was born in 1917 in Atlantic City. Influenced by Harlem life, he intended to emphasize in his work the racial struggles he experienced as a teenager during the 1920s. One of the examples is his *Harlem* series illustrating New York life. Same as Douglas, he turned to African-American history in his *Migration*, *Harriet Tubman*, and *Touissant L'Ouverture* series.[86]

But Douglas and Lawrence were not alone. William H. Johnson, Palmer Hayden, Lois Mailou Jones, Henry O. Tanner, and many other painters greatly contributed to the Harlem Renaissance with their portraits of African-American history and life in Harlem, all of which made use of African motifs. Also, photographer James Van Der Zee captured the raw life of the Harlem community and the most critical moments of the Harlem Renaissance.[87]

Among sculptors, Richmond Barthé is well-known for his portrayal of black subjects. The 1928 Harmon award-winning sculpture *Flute Boy* has the characteristic "primitive" motif, as does *African Dancer* (1933), and *Feral Benga* (1935). Sargent Johnson acknowledged black beauty with his figures, African masks and busts of children.[88] Meta Warrick Fuller's sculpture *Ethiopian Awakening* (1914) is known for its expectation of an African-American cultural revival, making possibly one of the first connections between African themes and the "New Negro."[89]

Painters and sculptors of the Harlem Renaissance used their talents mostly to define black identity by use of African and primitive motifs in order to uplift blacks' spirit. Some of them reflected their experiences in Harlem, many visual artists chose to reflect African-American struggles from the time of slavery to their cultural rising. Visual artists

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[83] Ibid., 50-52; Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 167-70.
[84] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 171.
[85] Ibid., 172.
[86] Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance: A-J*, 54-55.
[87] Ibid., 50-55.
[88] Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, 166-68.
[89] Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance: A-J*, 54.

contributed to the attempts of other black artists and intellectuals, as they tried to express black uniqueness and attract people's attention to the racial problems in American society.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to point out exactly when the period of the Harlem Renaissance began, and when it ended. Historians' views differ. Certainly, it slowly started to fade away with the coming of the Great Depression, when people turned their attention to economic problems during the 1930s.[90] However, it can be assumed that combination of several events at the turn of centuries stimulated African-Americans to speak out against racial inequalities. During the Great Migration, over one million southern blacks changed their setting from rural to urban. Strong racial segregation in the South, industrial requirements of World War I, and desperate need for a better life were main reasons for blacks to leave the South. However, life in the North was not ideal. Segregation was felt in the accommodation, jobs positions, and schooling system. In addition, after World War I, white soldiers returned to find out that their previous jobs were taken by blacks, which caused racial tension. This tension was reinforced with the rising Second Ku Klux Klan, and race riots broke out in several cities.

All these aspects aroused African-Americans to action. The NAACP formed and actively engaged in court battles, anti-lynching protests, in protest to ban *The Birth of a Nation*, and in the first large-scale civil right protest in 1919. *The Crisis*, the NAACP's publication edited by black leader W.E.B. DuBois, published the poems of rising African-American literati with the aim of encouraging blacks to act towards civil rights. Marcus Garvey's organization, the UNIA, reached great numbers of African-Americans. Although his vision of separate black state failed, he led blacks towards self-determination and self-respect, and strengthened their racial pride. Black's war experiences enhanced questions of belonging and African-American identity. Answers to these questions were sought by artists. Black literati like Langston Hughes, James Weldon Johnson, or Zora Neale Hurston expressed their dissatisfaction with racial discrimination, and used mostly African and folk themes to define their identity. Black music was characteristic itself. It was new, different and strongly criticized. Jazz with its rhythmical beat and improvisation was considered to be primitive. Despite this, it became popular among youth and was played in clubs, where whites and blacks for the first time socially mingled during the Prohibition era. The Harlem

[90] A. Yemisi Jimoh, "Review: The Harlem Renaissance, 1920-1940. Vol. 5. Remembering the Harlem Renaissance by Cary D.Witz," *African American Review* 33, no. 3 (1999): 526-28, accessed April 25, 2017, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2901222.

Renaissance brought musicians like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Billie Holiday to the forefront, who would later contribute to the civil rights activism. Visual artists used their talents to call attention to the beauty of African-Americans, to use African motifs in order to pursue black identity. Aaron Douglas was one of many who depicted the lives of African-Americans and their struggle throughout history.

Such examples demonstrate attempts of African-Americans to gain the attention and appreciation of whites, and to bridge the social gap between the races via art. The Harlem Renaissance represents a cultural and social awaking of blacks, which was gradually formed during the first decades of the twentieth century and peaked in the 1920s. Even though African-Americans did not achieve legislative changes during the era, the Harlem Renaissance changed African-Americans' perception of themselves. Pride, self-respect, boldness, and self-consciousness became new characteristics for them. Without the Harlem Renaissance, there might not have been the Civil Rights Movement.

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