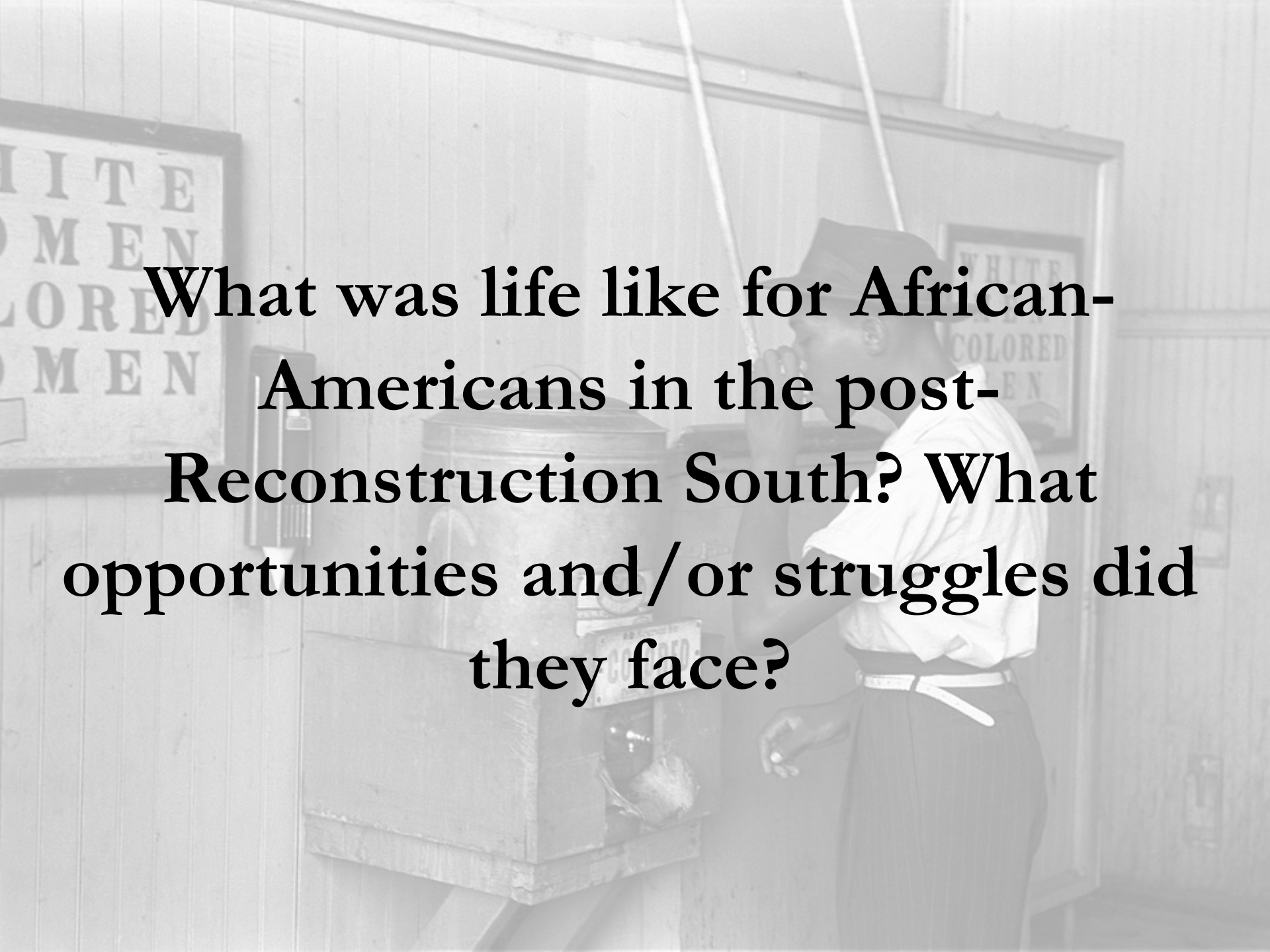


# The Great Migration & Harlem Renaissance



**THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE**



**What was life like for African-Americans in the post-Reconstruction South? What opportunities and/or struggles did they face?**

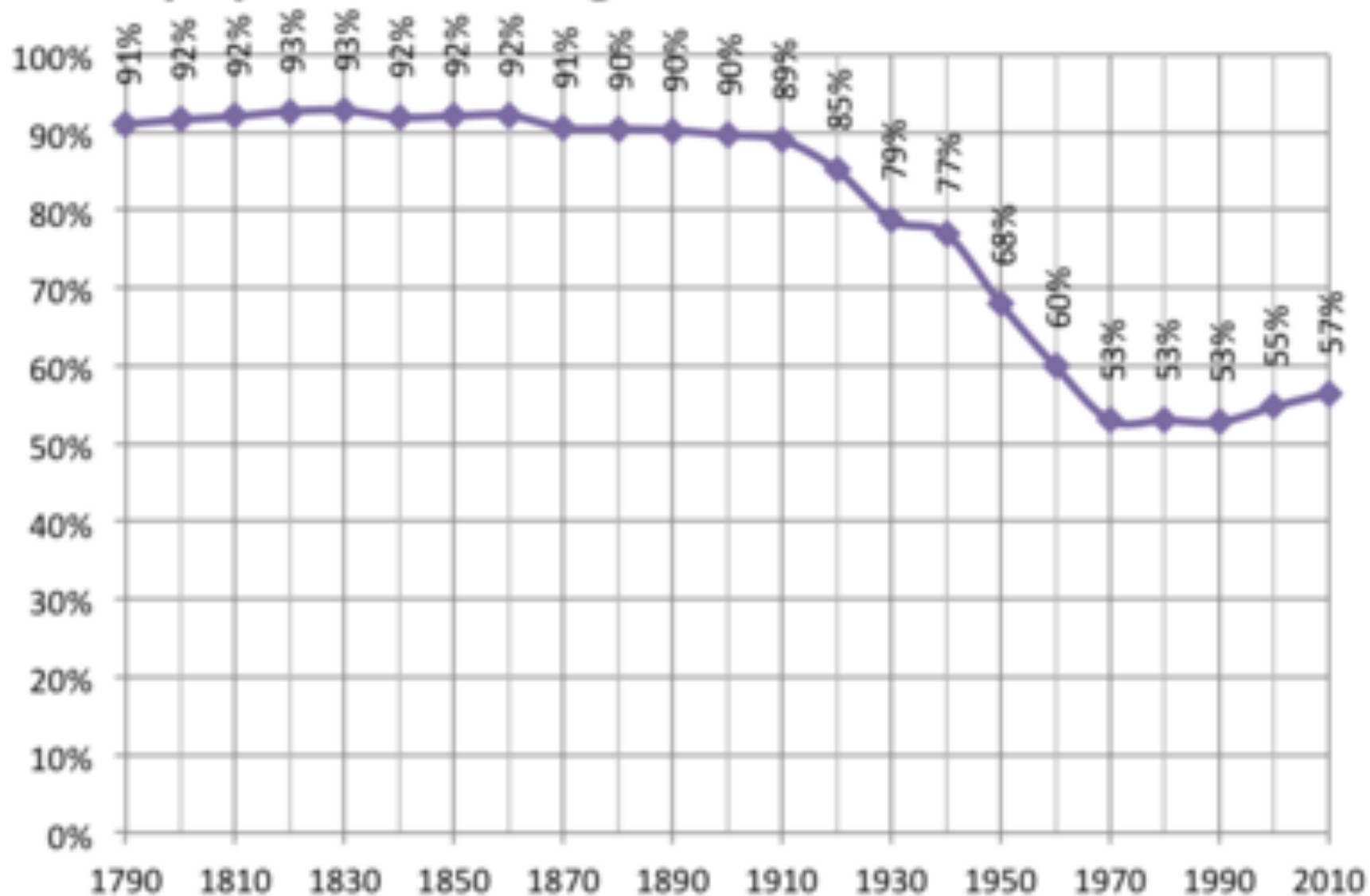
# The Great Migration



- **Great Migration**

- Mass migration of nearly 6 million blacks from the South to the North and West, took place between 1910s-1970s
- Before the migration, 90% of the nation's blacks lived in the South. By 1970, nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the nation's black population was living in the North.

## Percentage of African American population living in the American South





# Life in the South – Push factors

## Push factors

- Social reasons:
  - *rigid segregation by law (de jure segregation) in all areas of life*
  - *racial/sexual violence*
- Political reasons: by 1910 nearly all black men had lost the right to vote
- Economic reasons: *southern economy failing* (boll weevil, flooding, cotton prices dropping), *tenant farming and sharecropping*



# Life in North – Pull factors



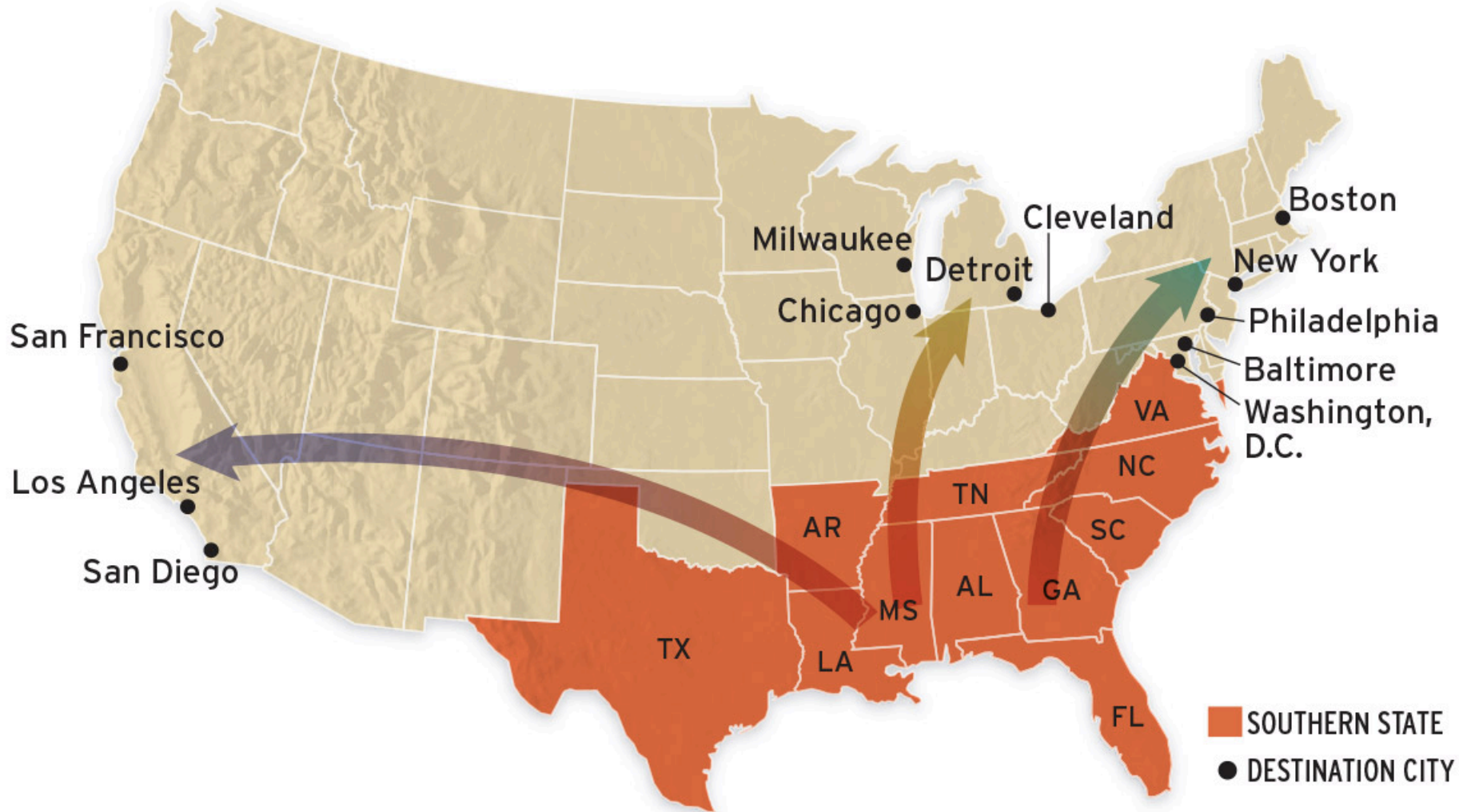
## Pull factors

- Northern newspapers like the *Chicago Defender* made life in the North sound appealing, labor recruiters
- Family and friends already living in the North wrote letters home about life in the North
- *Jobs in northern factories, access to education, political participation, “equality”, better housing*





THE REASON





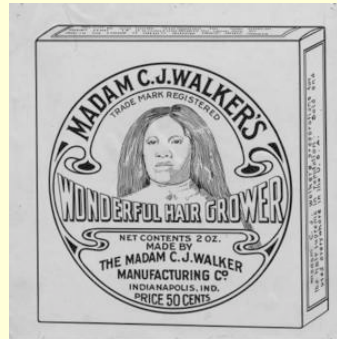
# Realities of Northern Life



- Jobs (cons): Mostly relegated to unskilled/semi-skilled jobs. Black men & women steered towards “3 H Jobs” (hot, hard, heavy) (*similar to immigrant’s experience!*)



- Jobs (pros): Beginnings of black entrepreneurship (Madame CJ Walker, Dunbar National Bank, National Negro League (black baseball clubs), etc.)



*The interior of the Dunbar National Bank in Harlem, owned and operated exclusively by blacks for blacks.*

- Education - Did gain access to education
- Housing - Overcrowded, restrictions on housing, bad conditions (*remember tenements?*)



# Realities of Northern Life (cont.)



## Racial Equality

- No more voting restrictions – DID gain voting rights for black adults
- Did face discrimination & racism
  - No longer faced legal segregation but they did find **de facto segregation** (segregation not by law but in practice – unspoken, unwritten rules)
  - Growing racial tension in the North as blacks were regarded by whites as competition for jobs/homes. A number of race riots occurred, like those in St. Louis in 1917 & Chicago in 1919.

# Chicago Race Riot, 1919



*The color line has reached the north.*



- On July 27, 1919, an African American teenager fell asleep on a raft in a lake on the south side of Chicago. He unknowingly violated an unofficial boundary drifting into the white side of the beach. A group of white youth saw him, and stoned him to death.
- Other African Americans witnessed this event and ran to the police to inform them of the incident. To their surprise the police did nothing; they did not arrest the boys who killed the teen.
- This began not only the Chicago race riots, but also race riots all around the US. The Chicago race riots resulted in 38 deaths (15 white, 23 black), and 537 injuries (342 black, 195 white).
- The summer of 1919 came to be known as the “Red Summer.”



# Rise of Harlem







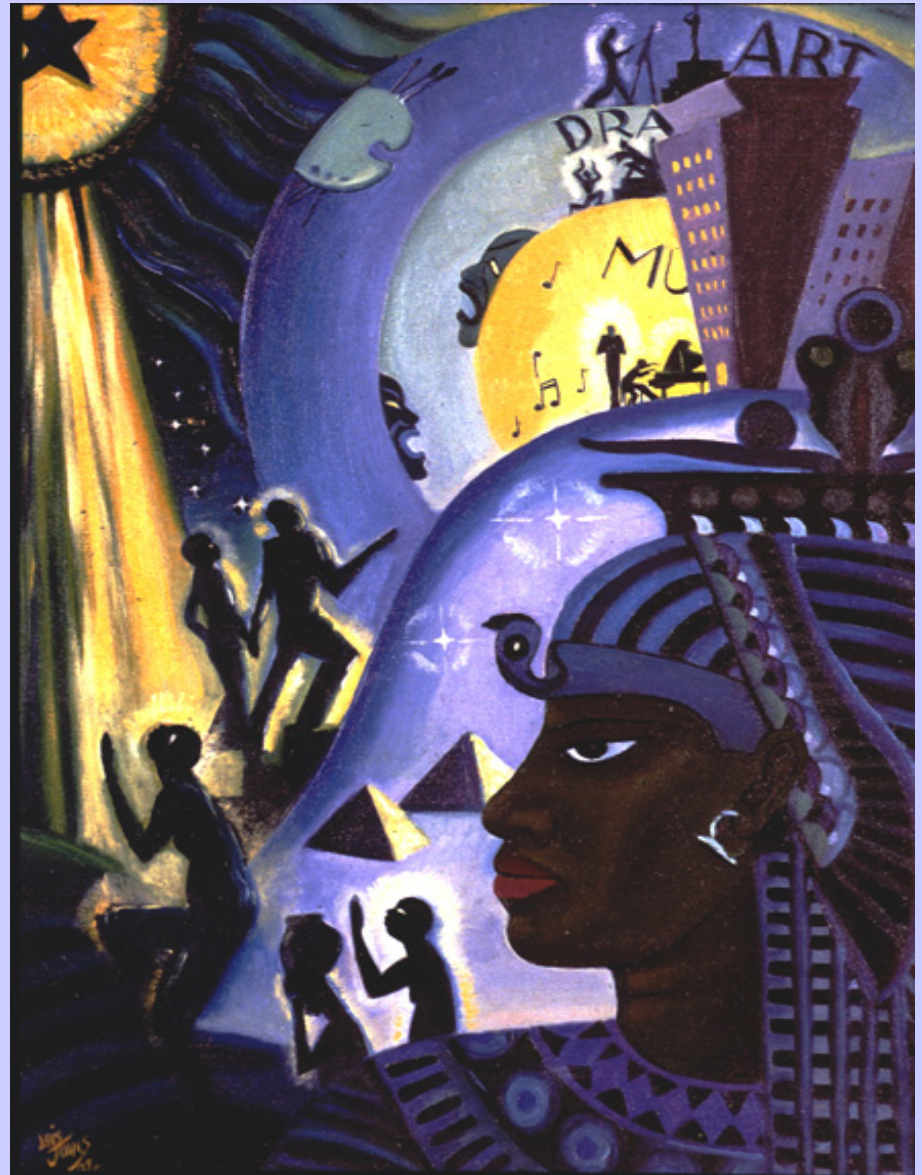
The Savoy: the first and only integrated ballroom in NYC during the Harlem Renaissance.



"The New Negro Has No Fear"

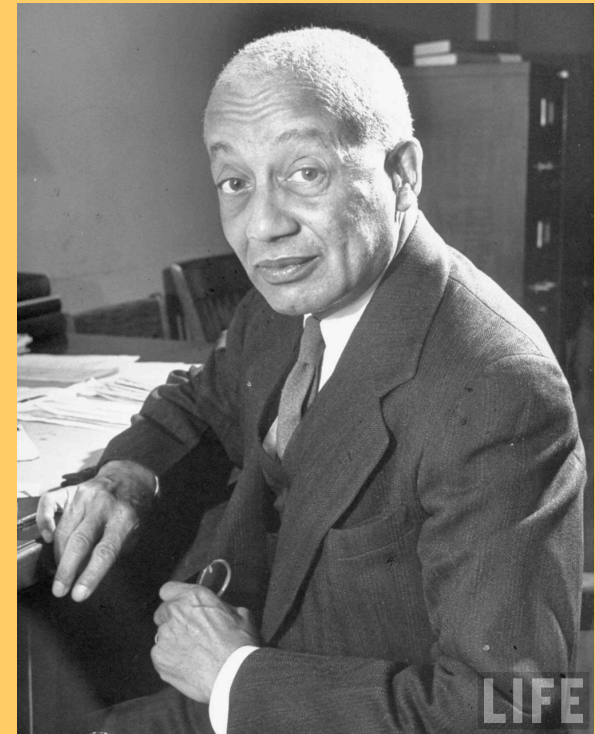
# What was the Harlem Renaissance?

- A cultural movement based in Harlem, NY in the 1920s and 1930s
- Time in which art, literature, and music among African-Americans flowered
- Time of rebirth and connection with African roots



# The “New Negro”

- Movement led by progressive young people who were sophisticated & well-educated in the arts
- Goal:
  - Wanted to finally see the full participation of blacks in American society and politics
  - Wanted to combat the age old stereotypes of blacks as servants and quasi-human
- Called on artists, musicians, writers to create an image to powerfully illustrate black humanity
  - Created an image with which others could identify and evoke empathy
  - Hoped white society would see black people’s humanity



Alain Locke, regarded as the father of the Harlem Renaissance and the founder of the New Negro movement



# Life in Harlem – The paintings of William H. Johnson



Street Life, Harlem



Harlem Street

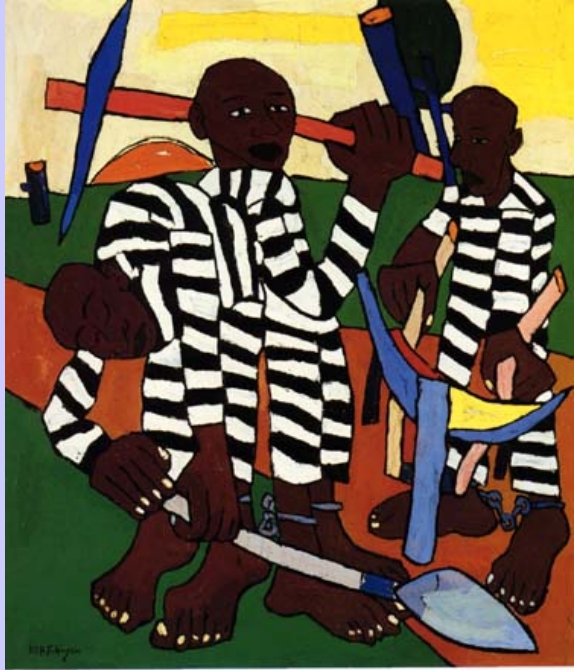


Jitterbugs



High Life, Harlem





Farewell



Cotton Pickers

Going to Church





Abraham Lincoln



Booker T. Washington Legend



John Brown Legend



# Art of Romare Bearden

- Major focus was representing African- American rural life in the South
- Much of his art focused on the simplicity of daily life in the South





# Aaron Douglas (1898-1979)

- Considered the model of the “New Negro”
- Focused on traditional African design and subject matter





# Poetry, Literature of the Harlem Renaissance



**Langston Hughes:**  
considered the  
poet of black  
America

## Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream  
deferred?  
Does it dry up  
Like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten  
meat?  
Or crust and sugar over--  
like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.  
Or does it explode?

## I, Too

I, too, sing America  
  
I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes.  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.  
  
To-morrow  
I'll sit at the table  
When company comes  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen"  
Then.  
  
Besides, they'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed, -  
  
I, too, am America.

# Claude McKay (1890-1948)



## **America**

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,  
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,  
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess  
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth!  
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,  
Giving me strength erect against her hate.  
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood,  
Yet as a rebel fronts a king in state,  
I stand within her walls with not a shred  
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.  
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,  
And see her might and granite wonders  
there,  
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,  
Like priceless treasures singing in the sand.



# “If We Must Die”

by Claude McKay

If we must die, let it not be like hogs  
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,  
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,  
Making their mock at our accursed lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,  
So that our precious blood may not be shed  
In vain; then even the monsters we defy  
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!  
O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe!  
Though far outnumbered let us show the brave,  
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!  
What though before us lies the open grave?  
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,  
Pressed to the wall, dying, fighting back!