Exoduster Movement

The Exoduster Movement, beginning in 1877, was the first grass-roots movement out of the South, during which, between 40,000 and 70,000 former slaves departed the South, primarily for Kansas. Benjamin Singleton was the official leader of the Exoduster Movement. Originally encouraging his compatriots to acquire land in Tennessee, he found that whites would not sell fruitful land to them. Singleton and his associates founded the Edgefield Real Estate and Homestead Association directing over 20,000 migrants to Kansas in two years. In 1879, Exodusters began to arrive in Nebraska and within a few years spread out to homestead throughout the Great Plains. Although multiple communities were formed, the new settlers were inclined to settle in the more open areas where more land was available for Homesteading.

Homesteaders

The African-American experience as a Homesteader was very similar to that of white Homesteaders. The Homestead Act of 1862 further opened the West to hard-working Americans, allowing essentially free land on the condition that improvements be made upon it for a period of no less than ten years.

Nicodemus

Many Black Townships were established as a result of the Exodusters Movement. The town of Nicodemus, KS is the most well known, most successful, and only remaining planned community devoted to African-American settlement. At its peak in 1880, the population of Nicodemus was around 600. It was founded in 1877 by a white town planner and an African-American minister and populated primarily by freed slaves from Kentucky. The harsh living conditions and climate were difficult to adjust to, but after a short time the settlement grew to include two newspapers, three general stores, at least three churches, a number of small hotels, one school, literary society, ice cream parlor, a bank, a livery, numerous homes and more.

The Great Migration

Not all African-Americans who left the South did so in pursuit of more rural living. In fact, an overwhelming majority left for the cities. Although not highly organized like the Exoduster Movement, The Great Migration drew roughly a million African-Americans from the rural South to the cities in the North between 1915 and 1920. The term is generally applied to the continued movement of African Americans out of the South following the Civil War until the 1970's. The causes for the mass migration were complex and varied. Not only did former slaves escape the terrible economic situation combined with being stuck as sharecroppers and the threat of lynchings, but also they were drawn to the better pay, a higher standard of living, and
improved political rights in the cities of the North. The Great Migration can be directly linked to what is regarded today as African-American culture.

To the Cities

Once the Great Migration began, the desire to head North gained momentum. Family members began to write home, copies of the *Chicago Defender*, a black newspaper, were published and distributed, and African-Americans began to leave for the cities at an increasing rate. Organizations were formed to cater to the integration of rural blacks into city life and wage earning.

Niagara Movement

The 20th Century Civil Rights Movement began in western New York and adjoining Fort Erie, Canada. In 1905, an African-American organization created in the region espoused, for the first time, a modern program of uncompromising protest and demand for change. In February 1905, W.E.B. Du Bois, John Hope, Monroe Trotter, Frederick McGhee, C. E. Bentley and 27 others met secretly to adopt the resolutions, which lead to the founding of the Niagara Movement. The Niagara Movement renounced Booker T. Washington's accommodation policies set forth in his famed "Atlanta Compromise" speech ten years earlier. On July 11th through 14th, 1905 on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, twenty-nine men met and formed a group they called the Niagara Movement. The name came because of the location and the "mighty current" of protest they wished to unleash. After a very short time, many white liberals joined with the nucleus of Niagara "militants" and with Du Bois, founded the NAACP.

Marcus Garvey: Back to Africa

Marcus Garvey was a proponent of black nationalism and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League. He was born in Jamaica, but was very active in the American arena as an advocate of the Back to Africa movement, encouraging those of African ancestry to return to their homeland. At the behest of Booker T. Washington, Garvey launched a lecture tour in the United States in 1916. Although not a supporter of black supremacy, Garvey believed in racial improvement and separation. He supported the KKK for their racial separation causes, pursuing their support in the Back to Africa movement.