

# POPULATION TODAY

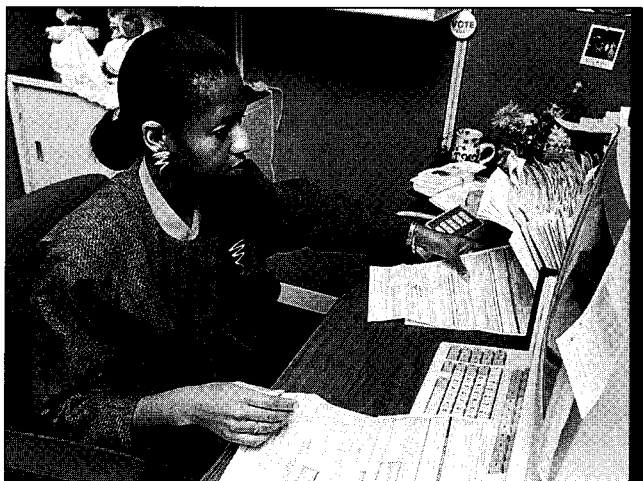
*News, numbers, and analysis*

*Black History Month Feature:*

## **Black Migration to the South Reaches Record Highs in 1990s**

By WILLIAM H. FREY

The migration of African Americans to the South from other parts of the United States has accelerated dramatically in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1996, and for the first time in any five-year period, the South saw net gains of black



MARTHA TABOR

*College graduates made up an important share of African Americans who moved to the South from other U.S. regions.*

migrants from the Northeast, Midwest, and West. Seven of the 10 metropolitan areas that gained the most black residents between 1990 and 1996 were in the South.

The South's booming metropolitan areas—Atlanta, Houston, Dallas-Fort Worth, and Miami—are responsible for some, but not all, of the South's black population gains. Black migrants of all ages and education levels, and from all regions, were drawn to many southern rural and urban areas.

The South led the nation in population growth between 1990 and 1996, registering a 46-percent share of the nation's total growth. During that same period, 65 percent of the nation's black population growth took place in the South, according to an analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau's newly released estimates of race and ethnicity. In contrast, in the 1970s and 1980s, about 50 percent of the nation's black population growth occurred in the South. (The levels were far smaller in previous decades.)

Between 1990 and 1996, the Southeast and Texas attracted a large share of black migrants (see Figure 1). During the 1990s, Atlanta, for the first time, led all other U.S. metropolitan areas in total black population gains, with an

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## Black Migration

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increase of 159,830 black residents from 1990 to 1996. Other southern metro areas that ranked in the top 10 for total black population gains included Washington, D.C.; Houston; Miami; Dallas-Fort Worth; Norfolk, Va.; and Orlando, Fla. Close behind were Memphis, Tenn.; Raleigh, N.C.; Jacksonville and Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla.; and Charlotte, N.C. Each area gained at least 35,000 African Americans, and each (except Washington, D.C.) increased its black population by at least 10 percent between 1990 and 1996.

These areas are contributing greatly to the South's economic resurgence. The growth in the Southeast of new corporate headquarters, high-technology development, knowledge-based industries, and tourism has led to a more diverse labor force and substantial population growth. Texas has seen an economic revival in the 1990s as well. The Census Bureau's new estimates show that these areas are drawing growing numbers of blacks.

### Migration Trend Reverses

The Census Bureau's Current Population Survey data for the period between 1990 and 1995 show that more African Americans left the Midwest, Northeast, and West than moved there (see Figure 2). These migration trends represent a reversal of the black exodus from the South that occurred between 1910 and the late 1960s (see Figure 3).

In the 1970s, industrial downsizing in the North and an improving racial and economic climate in the South led to a reversal of these African American migration patterns that continued through the 1980s. Between 1975 and 1980, and between 1985 and 1990, the South gained black migrants largely from the Northeast and Midwest, while still losing black migrants to the West. Between 1990 and 1995, the South experienced unprecedented gains in black migration: Compared to the previous five-year period, southern black migration increased from the

Figure 1  
**Top Black Population Gains by Metro Area, 1990 to 1996**

Metro area	Population gains
1. Atlanta	159,830
2. New York	154,446
3. Washington, D.C.	129,909
4. Houston	97,163
5. Miami-Fort Lauderdale	86,812
6. Chicago	75,390
7. Dallas-Fort Worth	75,344
8. Philadelphia	56,493
9. Norfolk, Va.	44,933
10. Orlando, Fla.	43,188
11. Boston	43,017
12. Detroit	40,535
13. Memphis, Tenn.	39,753
14. Raleigh-Durham, N.C.	38,767
15. Jacksonville, Fla.	38,607
16. Charlotte, N.C.	35,974
17. Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla.	35,913

Source: William H. Frey, "Black Movement to the South, and Regional Concentration of Races."

Northeast, more than doubled from the Midwest, and began from the West.

Some black migration from the West was a result of California's dismal economy in the early 1990s. Yet the economic resurgence of Texas—the number-one destination of California blacks—exerted an important pull. In California during the first half of the 1990s, 103,000 African Americans (more than one-half of the black migrants from the state) relocated to the South.

Similarly, the South is the major destination for African Americans who leave New York state, specifically for Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, and Maryland. Migrants from New York state and other northeastern and midwestern states contributed significantly to black population gains in the nation's southeastern states.

### Black Workers and Retirees Drawn to South's Suburbs, Small Towns

Most black migrants to the South are of working age and about one-fifth are college graduates; they thus contribute to the growth of the black middle-class population in cities such

as Atlanta, Charlotte, N.C., and Washington, D.C. Many blacks also are moving to the South to retire; 7 percent of blacks who moved to the South between 1990 and 1995 were ages 65 or older.

While black migrants to the South are moving to large metropolitan areas, they are more likely to settle in the suburbs than are current, long-term black residents. In today's South, 77 percent of the black population lives in metro areas, and 43 percent of those live in the suburbs. Yet, among new black migrants from other regions, 86 percent reside in metro areas and 59 percent of those live in the suburbs. The Census Bureau's race and ethnicity estimates show that 12 of the 32 fastest-growing counties for blacks include the suburbs of Atlanta, Washington, D.C., and Dallas.

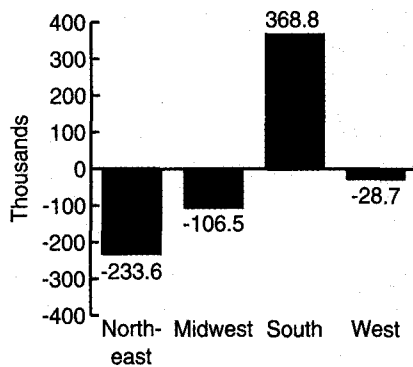
Smaller metropolitan areas and rural areas in the South also gained blacks in the 1990s. Between 1990 and 1996, southern metropolitan areas with populations of 1 million or more saw their black populations increase by 12.3 percent; black population gains in smaller metro areas and rural areas were 12.4 percent and 9.9 percent, respectively.

Several metro areas outside the South have shown high rates of black population growth in the 1990s as well, reflecting the impact of migration on traditionally small black populations. Metropolitan areas outside the South registering high growth rates for blacks between 1990 and 1996 include Las Vegas (47 percent increase), Phoenix (35 percent increase), and Minneapolis-St. Paul (33 percent increase).

### Continued Migration Forecast

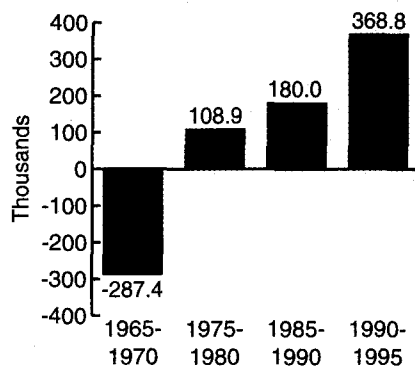
The Census Bureau's most recent state-level population projections through the year 2025 show continued high rates of black migration to the South. While not intended as predictions, these projections can be used to gauge future patterns. Along with Texas, several South Atlantic states are expected to attract large numbers of black migrants (see Figure 4). At the same time, states that

Figure 2  
**Black Net Migration for U.S. Regions, 1990 to 1995**



Source: William H. Frey, "Black Movement to the South, and Regional Concentration of Races."

Figure 3  
**Black Net Migration to the South, 1965 to 1995**



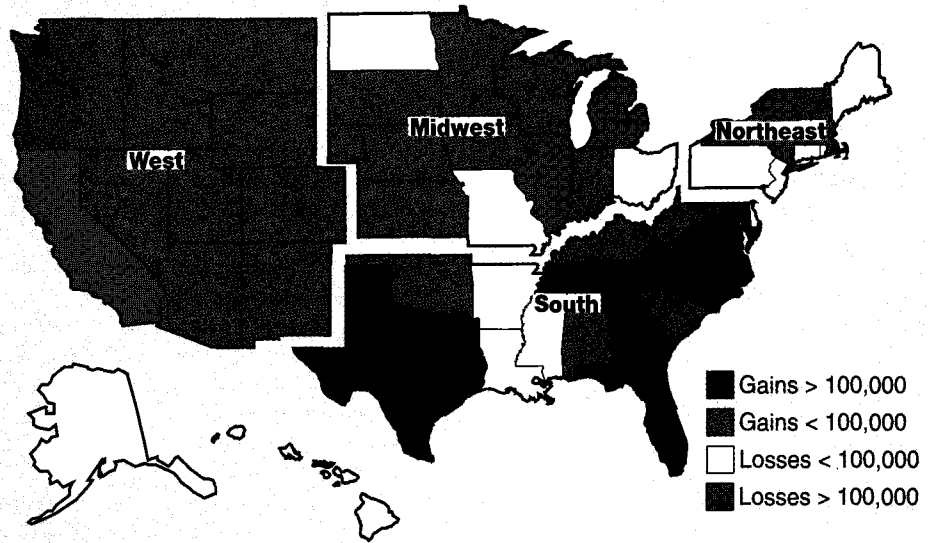
Source: William H. Frey, "Black Movement to the South, and Regional Concentration of Races."

will lose the largest numbers of blacks because of migration—New York, Illinois, California, Michigan, and Massachusetts—had been primary destinations for earlier waves of black migrants. While states in the nation's Midwest and West will see their black populations grow, the South is expected to attract the largest numbers of African American migrants.

In 1996, the following states had the largest black populations: New York, 3.1 million; California, 2.3 million; Texas, 2.3 million; and Florida, 2.1 million. By 2005, Texas, Florida, and Georgia are expected to rank

Figure 4  
**Projected Black Net Migration, 1995 to 2025**

Greatest gains		Greatest losses	
1. Texas	+584,039	1. New York	-1,405,031
2. Georgia	+531,815	2. Illinois	-360,751
3. Virginia	+274,410	3. California	-288,314
4. North Carolina	+252,858	4. Michigan	-127,858
5. Maryland	+203,075	5. Massachusetts	-108,477



Source: William H. Frey, "Black Movement to the South, and Regional Concentration of Races."

ahead of California: New York, 3.1 million; Texas 2.8 million; Florida, 2.5 million; and Georgia, 2.5 million. California is expected to be in fifth place, with 2.5 million black residents.

### Racial and Ethnic Groups Concentrating

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. Yet minority groups are concentrating regionally. While blacks move to the South, the nation's growing Hispanic and Asian populations (fueled by immigration) are concentrating in the West. More than half (53 percent) of the nation's black population resides in the South, compared with 33 percent of non-Hispanic whites, 31 percent of Hispanics, and only 17 percent of Asians. The West alone is home to 45 percent of the nation's Hispanics and 53 percent of its Asian population. Between 1990 and 1996, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco gained far more Hispanic and Asian residents than any southern metropolitan area.

The regional concentration of racial groups is the result of the

redistribution patterns of immigrant Hispanics and Asians combined with the new domestic migration of blacks. Black professionals and blue-collar workers, as well as blacks who have retired, are reversing decades of migration from the South by moving to the South's economically vibrant rural and urban areas. ■

### For more information:

PRB's Web site (<http://www.prb.org>) has additional data from this study, including black population change for U.S. metropolitan areas.

Data taken from: "Black Movement to the South, and Regional Concentrations of the Races." William H. Frey. Research Report. University of Michigan Population Studies Center (January 1998).

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