NYC Department of Records & Information Services

THE ROLE OF IMMIGRATION & MIGRATION IN NEW YORK CITY'S

20TH CENTURY LABOR MOVEMENT

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

Migration is a defining feature of human history. Across centuries and continents, people have moved in search of opportunity, leaving behind familiar places to build new lives elsewhere. Since its founding, New York City has served as a gateway for immigrants from around the world. This steady influx of newcomers is a key reason the city is celebrated for its extraordinary diversity and cultural richness. It is a place where countless cultures converge—and where people from all corners of the globe find a home.

In the early 20th century, New York saw a significant wave of immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, including large numbers from Italy, Romania, and neighboring countries. This period also marked a dramatic increase in the city's Jewish population, which rose from 80,000 in 1880 to 1.6 million by the 1920s. These immigrants played a vital role in shaping the city's neighborhoods, economy, and identity during a time of rapid industrialization.

Throughout the 20th century, U.S. immigration policy had a powerful influence on who could settle in New York. Restrictive quotas introduced in the 1920s drastically reduced immigration from many regions. However, changes in immigration law during the mid-century reopened pathways for new arrivals—this time from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Each wave brought new stories, skills, and traditions that helped redefine the city.

This curriculum aid centers on the lives and labor of immigrants and migrants from Ireland, Italy, Romania, China, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and the American South. Using primary sources, students will examine the challenges these communities faced, compare their experiences across time and geography, and explore their essential contributions to New York City's workforce, neighborhoods, and cultural fabric.

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Thank you for the vital work you do every day—guiding the next generation to think critically, creatively, and compassionately. This curriculum aid, developed by the New York City Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS), is part of our ongoing effort to bring the city's archival materials out of the stacks and into your classrooms—where educators and students can bring history to life. The following materials are designed to support meaningful engagement with the past—not as a list of dates and facts, but as a lens for understanding the world we live in today. By encouraging inquiry, dialogue, and reflection, this curriculum invites students to consider how historical experiences continue to shape the present.

Migration offers a powerful framework for exploring themes of identity, community, and social change. While the idea of America as a "melting pot" is often celebrated, it can sometimes obscure the diversity of student experiences. In an era of increasingly complex conversations about immigration, the classroom becomes a critical space for connection—where students can link their own stories to broader movements and recognize their place within a shared human history.

By learning about the lives and labor of earlier immigrants and migrants to New York City, students may find language to describe their own journeys or those of their families. This understanding can help foster empathy, belonging, and a deeper appreciation for the resilience and contributions of those who came before.

To support these conversations, we've included definitions of key terms related to immigration, migration, and labor. Students may encounter dated language when describing marginalized communities. It is critical to openly discuss this prior to engaging with sources on these complex topics. We hope these materials inspire meaningful dialogue and discovery in your classroom.

STANDARDS

Standards: Grade 11

11.4 Post-Civil War Era (1865-1900): Reconstruction resulted in political reunion and expanded constitutional rights. However, those rights were undermined, and issues of inequality continued for African Americans, women, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Chinese immigrants.

11.5 Industrialization and Urbanization (1870-1920): The United States was transformed from an agrarian to an increasingly industrial and urbanized society. Although this transformation created new economic opportunities, it also created societal problems that were addressed by a variety of reform efforts.

11.10 Social and Economic Change/Domestic Issues (1945-present): Racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities were addressed by individuals, groups, and organizations. Varying political philosophies prompted debates over the role of the federal government in regulating the economy and providing a social safety net.

Standards: Grade 12

1.3.1. Students compare and contrast the experiences of different ethnic, national, and religious groups, including Native American Indians, in the United States, explaining their contributions to American society and culture.

1.3.2. Students research and analyze the major themes and developments in New York State and United States history (e.g., colonization and settlement; Revolution and New National Period; immigration; expansion and reform era; Civil War and Reconstruction; The American labor movement; Great Depression; World Wars; contemporary United States).

1.3.4. Students understand the interrelationships between world events and developments in New York State and the United States (e.g., causes for immigration, economic opportunities, human rights abuses, and tyranny versus freedom).

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Assimilation

The process by which people from different cultures or backgrounds begin to adopt the language, customs, and behaviors of the dominant group, often to fit in or be accepted.

Asylum

Protection given by a government to someone who has come to its border or is already inside the country and fears returning to their home because of danger, such as war, violence, or persecution.

Demographics

Statistical data about a group of people — such as age, race, gender, income, or where they live — used to understand the makeup of a population.

Ethnicity

A group of people who share common cultural traditions, language, religion, history, or ancestry.

Immigration

The act of moving to a new country to live there permanently or for a long time.

Migration

Any movement of people, either temporary or permanent, from one place to another. This can be from one country to another or within the same country (like moving from the South to the North in the United States).

Quota System

A government policy that sets a limit on how many people can officially enter a country from certain places, often used in the past to control immigration based on nationality or race.

Refugee

A person who is forced to leave their home country because of war, natural disaster, or fear of persecution. Refugees must go through a careful screening and approval process by governments or international organizations before they are allowed to resettle in another country.

INTERNAL LINKS

REC0047_2_150_2007 | NYC Municipal Archives

Salty Words from Mike Quill on the 1966 Transit Strike | Annotations: The NEH Preservation Project | WNYC

Salty Words from Mike Quill on the 1966 Transit Strike - Annotations- The NEH Preservation Project.pdf

REC0047_2_171_2371 | NYC Municipal Archives

REC0047_2_168_2305 | NYC Municipal Archives

REC0003_3_08_089 | NYC Municipal Archives

REC0078_LT9081 | NYC Municipal Archives

REC0047_2_160_2161 | NYC Municipal Archives

REC0078_LT8367 | NYC Municipal Archives

Joseph Monserrat WNYC - REC0078_LT8367 - NYC Municipal Archives.pdf

REC0047_2_150_2024 | NYC Municipal Archives

REC0047_2_153_2064 | NYC Municipal Archives

Harlem Conditions

PRIMARY SOURCE 1

Frank Vardy, a demographer with New York City's Planning Department, studied how immigrant communities settled and moved through neighborhoods over time. His research helped the City respond more effectively to the needs of new arrivals—such as by offering adult English classes, providing interpreters in schools, and adding multilingual signs in public buildings.

Begin watching this video at the 15:05 mark and continue to the end. In this clip, Vardy also discusses the historically family-centered nature of immigration to the United States. He explains how migration often happened in waves, with one family member arriving first and helping others follow.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 1

1. What does Frank Vardy suggest about the overall patterns and experiences of immigration to the United States?

2. Why, according to Vardy, did immigrants continue to settle in New York City during the 1990s—even when the economy was struggling?

3. Why are migrants more visible in underground economy operations?

4. Why are immigrants more vulnerable to exploitation and violence while working in underground economy operations?

IRISH IMMIGRANTS AND NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR MOVEMENT

One of the earliest waves of Irish immigration to the American colonies came in the 18th century with the arrival of the Scotch-Irish—people of Scottish descent who had previously settled in Ireland before crossing the Atlantic. However, the largest wave of Irish immigration occurred in the 1840s and 1850s, when more than two million Irish arrived in New York City, fleeing the Great Famine and economic hardship at home.

Irish Americans became a powerful force in New York's labor movements during the 20th century, particularly through the Transport Workers Union (TWU). Founded in 1934, the TWU initially organized subway workers and bus drivers in New York City and nearby areas. Over time, it expanded to represent workers in other industries, including taxis, railways, airlines, and utilities. In the 1960s, the TWU was led by Mike Quill, a charismatic and fearless speaker known for his thick Irish brogue. Quill had once fought with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) during the struggle for Ireland's independence, but immigrated to New York City after the Irish Civil War in search of better opportunities.

Under Quill's leadership, the TWU organized one of the most significant labor actions in New York City history: the transit strike of 1966. On the morning of January 1, subway and bus workers brought the city's transit system to a halt, demanding better wages and benefits.

PRIMARY SOURCE 2

In this 10-minute audio clip, Mike Quill addresses reporters at a press conference during the fourth day of the 1966 transit strike. As you listen, note the heavy Irish brogue of Mike Quill, reflecting his heritage.

Click here for a transcript of the "Salty Words from Mike Quill" radio broadcast.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 2

1. What does this recording reveal about the situation Mike Quill and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) were facing during the strike?

2. How would you describe Mike Quill's speaking style?

    a. the actual manner of speaking (the intonation, the pace of speaking, etc.)

    b. His communication style (is it combative? Witty? Fierce? Agitated? Relaxed? Etc.)

    c. The setting and timing of this press conference

    d. His rapport with the reporters

3. What do you think Mike Quill was trying to accomplish in this press conference?

ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS AND NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR MOVEMENT

Italy has a deep connection with U.S. history. Many of the first Europeans to explore the lands that would later become known as the Americas came from Italy. In fact, the name "America" comes from the 15th-century Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. Italians who arrived in what is now the United States before, during, and after its founding brought with them world-renowned skills in craftsmanship.

Italian immigrants arrived in the United States from across the Italian peninsula, including many peasants and agricultural laborers from southern regions like Sicily. Although Italy had recently unified in the late 19th century, the country remained divided by deep regional tensions, economic inequality, and the aftermath of internal conflicts. Widespread poverty, disease, and natural disasters further limited opportunities for many Italians, prompting them to seek better lives abroad. At the turn of the 20th century, the United States—undergoing rapid industrial growth—was seen as a place of economic promise. Italian immigrants took on physically demanding jobs in farming, mining, and construction, helping to build the nation's roads, railways, and urban infrastructure.

Many Italian immigrant women did factory work, especially in the textile trade. Facing low pay and harsh working conditions, many participated in significant strikes to improve the work environment and earn better pay.

PRIMARY SOURCE 3

View this collection of still photographs of Italian immigrants. The photo shown above appears at the 3:30 mark in the video. Since this is a compilation of vintage photos, you may wish to fast forward portions or pause the video to examine those of particular interest.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 3

1. What experiences did Italian and Jewish laborers have in common? In what ways were their experiences different?
2. What were some possible benefits of Italian and Jewish laborers joining forces and working together?
3. Can you think of any reasons why they might have been hesitant to work together? What challenges or differences might have made collaboration difficult?

PRIMARY SOURCE 4

Watch this excerpt from an interview with Lucy Gallo, a woman who worked in New York's garment industry during the early 1900s and was a member of a workers' union. View the segment from 6:27 to 8:46.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 4

1. What was Lucy's childhood environment like?

2. How did Lucy's experience growing up in Italy compare to the experience of a young laborer in New York City?

3. How was Lucy's experience working in the garment industry at age fifteen different from the life of a typical fifteen-year-old today?

EASTERN EUROPEAN IMMIGRANTS AND NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR MOVEMENT

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, thousands of Eastern European Jewish people immigrated to the United States to escape widespread antisemitism. Many came from Russian and present-day Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, where Jewish communities faced poverty, persecution, and violent pogroms (organized massacres).

With Ellis Island serving as a major entry point just off the coast of New York City, this wave of immigration contributed to the city's rapid population growth. Most Eastern European Jewish people settled on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, a densely populated tenement district that, at the time, became home to the largest Jewish population in the world.

Many Jewish women had worked in the garment industry in Eastern Europe, and upon arriving in New York, they often took similar jobs out of necessity. The conditions in these factories were harsh—twelve-hour workdays with only short breaks were common, and safety standards were minimal. The tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire on March 25, 1911—until 9/11, the deadliest workplace disaster in New York City's history—shocked the nation. The fire spread quickly, and locked exit doors trapped workers inside. A total of 146 workers, most of them young Jewish women, lost their lives.

The disaster galvanized the labor movement. Leaders of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU), along with reformers and politicians, pushed for major improvements in workplace safety and labor laws. This activism also spurred many Jewish immigrant women to participate in broader social movements, including the fight for women's suffrage.

Students will watch video and audio interviews of immigrant experiences and examine turn-of-the-century primary source documents. These include records from the Mayor's Office related to the licensing of street peddlers. In response to the growing presence of more than 6,000 pushcarts in the city, Mayor George B. McClellan established a commission to study the challenges and impact of street vending in New York City.

PRIMARY SOURCE 5A

Please read the first document in this link, a letter to the mayor regarding the state of dissatisfaction amongst pushcart peddlers in the city.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 5A

1. What concerns might the mayor have about the pushcart peddlers marching on City Hall? Why might he want to prevent such a march?

2. How might a march on city hall influence the mayor's decision making?

3. What are some reasons the mayor might want to help the pushcart peddlers? What are some reasons that would make the mayor hesitate to help the peddlers?

PRIMARY SOURCE 5B and 5C

After reading the letter to the mayor, please scroll and read the two petitions from the pushcart peddlers addressed to the mayor.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 5B and 5C

1. What do the pushcart peddlers want from the mayor?

2. If you were a pushcart peddler, what actions could you imagine taking for support from the mayor?

3. What do you think will happen to the pushcart peddlers if the mayor does not accommodate their demands?

PRIMARY SOURCE 6

Listen to selected portions of this 1940 radio program commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire, especially 11:36-21:30 and 21:33 to 29:20.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 6

Think about the statement from the President of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), describing the history and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (11:36-21:30). According to the speaker:

1. What decisions by the owners of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company contributed to the deaths of so many in the fire?

2. Describe the relationship between the owners of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company and unions? What motivated the owners to take their position against unions?

3. What measures might the union president have outlined to prevent fatalities?

Please listen to the excerpt from 21:33 to 29:20, which contains a statement from an eyewitness of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company Fire.

4. In relation to her observation of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, this speaker mentioned a "stricken conscience of public guilt." What do you think she meant by this phrase?

5. According to the speaker, what effect did the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire have, both in terms of public awareness and legislation?

CHINESE IMMIGRANTS AND NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR MOVEMENT

Chinese immigrants played a significant role in shaping the United States in the 20th century, contributing to the nation's growth and development while facing discrimination and adversity.

In the early 20th century, Chinese immigrants, primarily men, came to the United States seeking economic opportunities, especially in the Western states. They faced immense prejudice and were initially barred from becoming naturalized citizens due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Many worked as laborers in mining, agriculture, and construction, including on the Transcontinental Railroad. Despite their contributions, they were subjected to racial violence, segregation, and restrictive laws like the Geary Act of 1892 which required Chinese residents to carry proof of legal status.

In cities like New York, Chinese immigrants built vibrant communities and economies centered around businesses like laundries, restaurants, and garment factories. However, they frequently toiled in sweatshop conditions with low pay and long hours, especially women who made up a large part of the garment workforce in urban areas in the late 20th century. Their personal narratives reveal the struggles of working mothers trying to support families while facing discrimination.

PRIMARY SOURCE 7

Starting at 17:15, view this video that shares the lives of the unheard Chinese immigrants who worked in the food industry who fought to support workers' rights.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 7

1. What union benefits were originally offered to the restaurant workers at the Silver Palace?
2. Describe the conflict that happened at the Silver Palace?
3. How are illegal immigrants more susceptible to abuse from employers?
4. What was meant by "Fighting a Battle for all of Chinatown?" How does this impact the community?

PRIMARY SOURCE 8

Watch this video on labor and asylum seekers in the Chinese community from 5:45 – 9:00.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 8

1. In the 1993 conversation about human resources, Stanley Mark said that immigrants generate more than they consume. He also said the sum is greater than the parts. What was he speaking of in regard to immigrants and labor?
2. Stanley Mark shared his opinion of the management and policy for asylum seekers. What were the problems with this system?

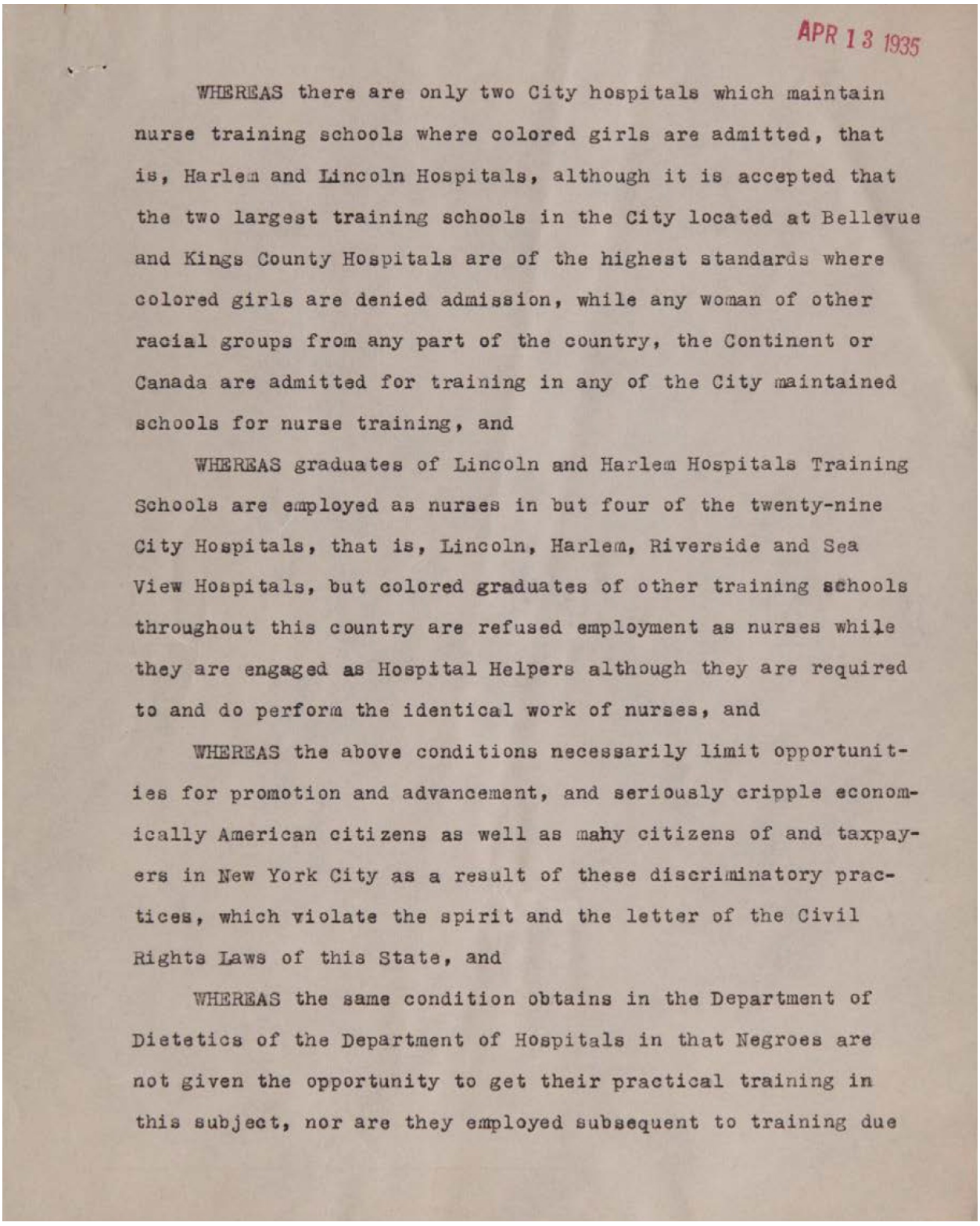
THE GREAT MIGRATION AND NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR MOVEMENT

Between 1910 and 1940, Harlem witnessed a rapid and unprecedented surge in its Black population. This influx was part of the broader Great Migration, a large-scale movement in which millions of African Americans relocated from the rural South to northern urban centers in pursuit of better economic opportunities and freedom from the oppressive racial segregation of the Jim Crow South. The influx of Black residents, compounded by the economic strain of the Great Depression, exacerbated existing discrimination, intensified the struggle for limited job opportunities, and heightened racial tensions.

Upon arrival in New York City, many Black migrants found the promise of economic prosperity to be an illusion. Despite their qualifications and willingness to work, they faced severe discrimination in the labor market. They were frequently excluded from skilled jobs, pushed into low-paying, unstable positions, or else entirely shut out from certain industries. In public utility sectors such as gas, electricity, and telephone services — despite a substantial Black consumer base — Black workers were restricted to only the most menial roles. Such racial discrimination was justified by many companies through "tradition and custom" or concerns about potential friction between races. Labor unions also engaged in similar discriminatory practices, further limiting opportunities for advancement.

The challenges brought on by the Great Migration, particularly in terms of employment discrimination, extended to the healthcare industry. Just as Black laborers were restricted to low-paying, unstable jobs in other fields, Black nurses faced significant barriers to advancement and were subjected to racially segregated practices. For instance, only two city hospitals, Harlem and Lincoln, admitted Black women to their nurses' training programs, excluding them from the more prestigious Bellevue and Kings County Hospitals. Black nurses were also consistently transferred to Harlem Hospital, while white nurses were moved to institutions outside of the Harlem area. To learn more about the problems Black nurses faced, visit the Harlem Conditions website.

PRIMARY SOURCE 9A



APR 13 1935

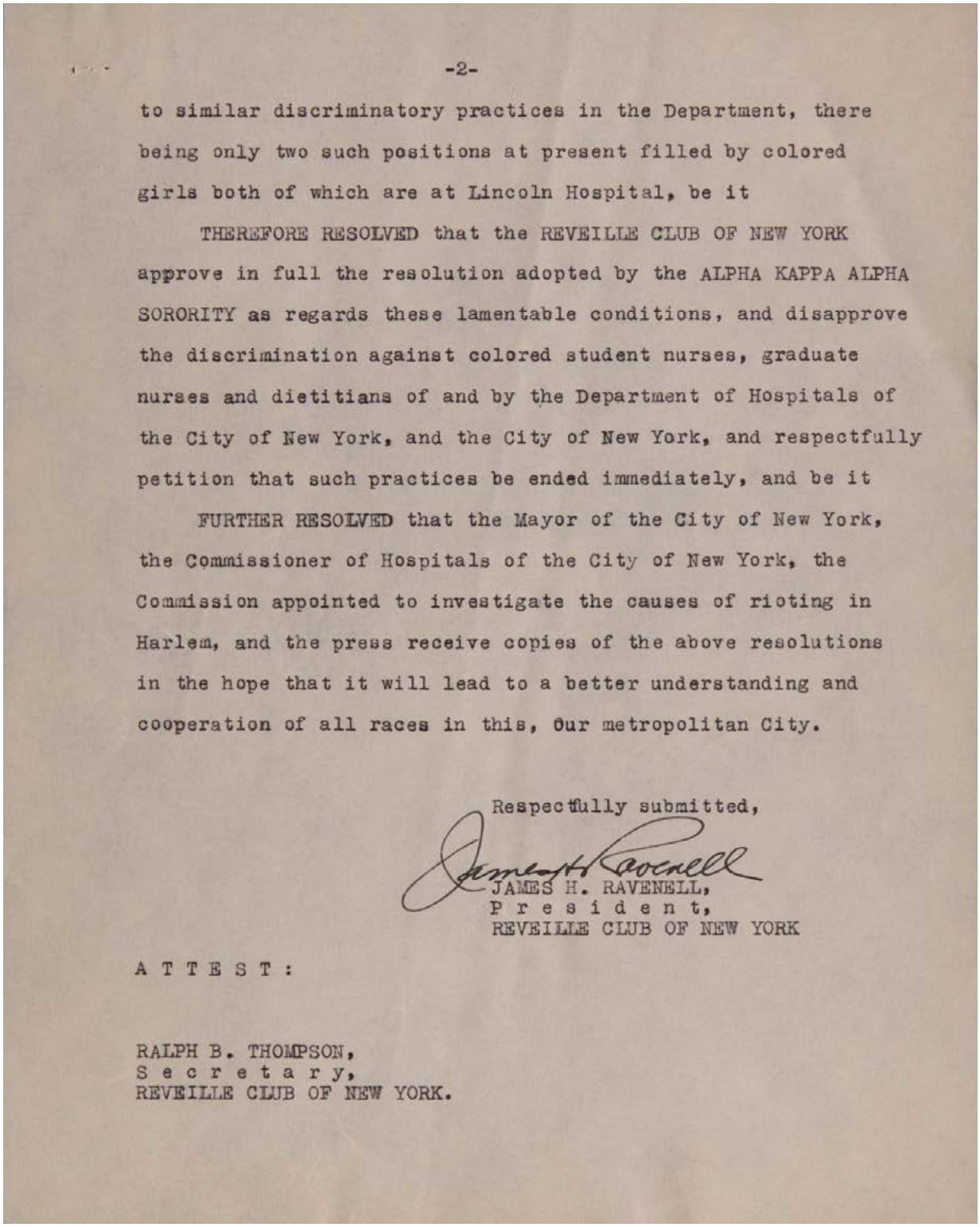
WHEREAS there are only two City hospitals which maintain nurse training schools where colored girls are admitted, that is, Harlem and Lincoln Hospitals, although it is accepted that the two largest training schools in the City located at Bellevue and Kings County Hospitals are of the highest standards where colored girls are denied admission, while any woman of other racial groups from any part of the country, the Continent or Canada are admitted for training in any of the City maintained schools for nurse training, and

WHEREAS graduates of Lincoln and Harlem Hospitals Training Schools are employed as nurses in but four of the twenty-nine City Hospitals, that is, Lincoln, Harlem, Riverside and Sea View Hospitals, but colored graduates of other training schools throughout this country are refused employment as nurses while they are engaged as Hospital Helpers although they are required to and do perform the identical work of nurses, and

WHEREAS the above conditions necessarily limit opportunities for promotion and advancement, and seriously cripple economically American citizens as well as mahy citizens of and taxpayers in New York City as a result of these discriminatory practices, which violate the spirit and the letter of the Civil Rights Laws of this State, and

WHEREAS the same condition obtains in the Department of Dietetics of the Department of Hospitals in that Negroes are not given the opportunity to get their practical training in this subject, nor are they employed subsequent to training due

Page 1 of proclamation from James Ravenell, President of the Revielle Club, a NYC organization founded in 1932 to recognize and celebrate Black leaders in the community.



-2-

to similar discriminatory practices in the Department, there being only two such positions at present filled by colored girls both of which are at Lincoln Hospital, be it

THEREFORE RESOLVED that the REVEILLE CLUB OF NEW YORK approve in full the resolution adopted by the ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY as regards these lamentable conditions, and disapprove the discrimination against colored student nurses, graduate nurses and dietitians of and by the Department of Hospitals of the City of New York, and the City of New York, and respectfully petition that such practices be ended immediately, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor of the City of New York, the Commissioner of Hospitals of the City of New York, the Commission appointed to investigate the causes of rioting in Harlem, and the press receive copies of the above resolutions in the hope that it will lead to a better understanding and cooperation of all races in this, our metropolitan City.

Respectfully submitted,

JAMES H. RAVENELL,
P r e s i d e n t,
REVEILLE CLUB OF NEW YORK

A T T E S T :

RALPH B. THOMPSON,
S e c r e t a r y,
REVEILLE CLUB OF NEW YORK.

Page 2 of proclamation from James Ravenell, President of the Revielle Club, a NYC organization founded in 1932 to recognize and celebrate Black leaders in the community.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 9

1. How did racial segregation in nursing reflect broader social and cultural attitudes in NYC during the 1930s?

2. What role did the NYC government play in either perpetuating or addressing employment discrimination?

3. How did the economic opportunities for Black nurses compare to those for white nurses in NYC during the 1930s?

4. How do the issues of employment discrimination in nursing during the 1930s in NYC relate to the challenges faced by minority healthcare workers today?

PUERTO RICAN MIGRANTS, AND NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR MOVEMENT

As a result of the treaty following the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rico became a territory of the United States. The Jones-Shafroth Act granted Puerto Ricans American citizenship, allowing travel to and from the United States without a passport. Puerto Rican males could now be drafted or enroll into the military. This change in citizenship status gave rise to Puerto Ricans heading to New York City. But industrialized New York presented other difficulties to these newcomers. Discrimination, language barriers, and insufficient technical skills were barriers Puerto Ricans faced upon arrival.

PRIMARY SOURCE 10

Listen from 7:25- 13:17 to this 1967 audio recording of a Campus Press Conference with Joseph Monsarrat, who was the National Director of the Migration Division at the time. The Migration Division was responsible for helping migrants adjust to their new surroundings and, to this end, operated programs in numerous social service areas such as employment, identification, education and community organization. We will engage with this source to investigate public perceptions of Puerto Rican migration at the time of the interview.

Click here for a transcription of key sections of the interview.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 10

1. From the conversation, how would you describe the people participating in the interview session with Mr. Monsarrat?
2. Describe the opportunities that unions provided for Puerto Ricans in the garment industry?
3. How do you think Mr. Monsarrat's position as a Puerto Rican man influences his attitude during the conference?

Caribbean Immigrants and NYC's Labor Market

Limited resources and opportunities were the primary reasons that people left the Caribbean. Beginning around 1900, New York City was an important destination and by the 1930s, people of Caribbean descent made up 30 percent of the city's total black population.

Dominican immigration was restricted until the second half of the 20th century after the death of dictator Rafael Trujillo, who limited emigration and access to visas. Political unrest followed but with U.S. military intervention, a mass emigration movement allowed the Dominican population to multiply across the United States. The 1980s brought a series of economic crises in the Dominican Republic. One-fourth of the work force was unemployed, and basic services such as electricity were unreliable. This resulted in additional U.S. emigration and the Dominican population grew to half a million people in the United States.

You will view two videos featuring Caribbean immigrants. The first presents the Montana family who immigrated from the Dominican Republic in the 1980s. Adolfo and Luisa, parents of two children, lived in Washington Heights and worked long hours for a better life. The next video is a presentation from 1992 by the Caribbean American Chamber of Congress to minority entrepreneurs.

PRIMARY SOURCE 13

Watch this 1993 video interview of Luisa and Adolfo Montana, who immigrated from the Dominican Republic.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 13

1. Why was Adolfo's adjustment to coming to the United States less difficult than Luisa's?
2. The "underground economy" was discussed. What does that mean?
3. At 14:13 Adolfo was asked about taking a job away from an American. What was his response? What does that say about the jobs that immigrants are willing to take?
4. What did Luisa need to do in order to get started in business?

PRIMARY SOURCE 14

Watch this 1992 video of a conference for Caribbean Americans who own and run their own businesses. Start at 5:45.

QUESTIONS—PRIMARY SOURCE 14

1. What was the purpose of holding this session?
2. What was the message from the head of the Korean Small Business Center?
3. What are the benefits of joint ventures of entrepreneurs from different immigrant backgrounds?

CONCLUSION

From exploring primary sources, we've heard 20th century stories of those who came to New York City from across the nation and the globe seeking economic opportunities and political freedom. Barriers due to discrimination, English proficiency, credentials, and training, placed migrants and immigrants at a stark disadvantage as they tried to enter, negotiate, and advance in a variety of industries. They were vulnerable to exploitation and unsafe conditions which were prevalent within many trades. In spite of these difficulties, those who toiled to make New York City their home became part of the fabric of our many communities.

Immigrants continue to be integral to the labor movement. They are vital to a robust workforce and contribute to the economic growth of our cities. Managing worker shortages ensures that the broader economy can function and grow. By increasing the labor force, immigrants create more jobs which labor movements need to protect. These protections will benefit not only immigrants but all workers.

CULMINATING ACTIVITIES

Small Group and Class Conversations:

Consider the primary sources you've viewed on the immigrant/migrant labor movements. Compare the experiences of the different immigrant/migrant groups. How are they similar? How are they different? Discuss any changes over time that you may have noticed.

Do you think immigrants benefit from labor movements or do labor movements benefit from immigrants? Which group do you think benefits more than the other? Use primary sources to support your opinion.

ABOUT US

The mission of the NYC Department of Records and Information Services (DORIS) is to foster civic life by preserving and providing public access to historical and contemporary records and information about New York City government.

The agency ensures that City records are properly maintained following professional archival and record management practices. Materials are available to diverse communities, both online and in person.

For more information about how DORIS can work with your school, please contact us via email: education@records.nyc.gov or visit our website.

Follow us on social media!

@nycrecords @nycrecords @nycarchives @nycdeptofrecords

Contributors: Katherine Liu, Juliana Martini, Karina Mirenda, Eva Nivard, Padme Trujillo, and Michael Wang.