

The Impact of Economic Opportunities on African American Migration Patterns in Oakland

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Abstract

This paper connects how economic opportunities have impacted African American in-migration and out-migration patterns in Oakland over the long-run and throughout time. During the wartime boom of the 1940s, African Americans migrated to Oakland in search of economic opportunities in the city's burgeoning defense industry. And ever since the initial wartime migration in the 1940s, Oakland's black population has increased through chain-migration patterns and biological reproduction. With a total black population of 8,462 in 1940, Oakland's black community peaked at 163,426 in 1990. However, in recent decades, Oakland's black community underwent an exodus, losing 33% of its black population between 1990 and 2020. Through concentrating on population change and economic opportunities, and their relationship to each other over time, my results indicate that Oakland's shift from an industrial economy to a postindustrial economy has negatively impacted economic opportunities for African Americans due to a more competitive labor market.

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1. Introduction

Although American historians have addressed general notions of war and urbanization from a short-term perspective, there is little research incorporating an approach which connects how economic opportunities have impacted African American migration in the long-run and over time. Otherwise put, almost all studies of black migration during the Second World War have focused on the short-term economic shock of the wartime cities and migrants themselves, usually neglecting the long-term economic and social effects on urban black communities. Specifically, literature concerning the long-term impact of World War II upon patterns of African American in-migration and out-migration in Oakland is still at a largely unexplored stage. So, in order to construct a broader view than previously published research, I will use comparative case studies, the US Census database, books, scholarly articles, and secondary sources to identify how changing economic conditions have impacted Oakland's black migration patterns from 1940 to the modern 21st century. To analyze Oakland's pattern of in-migration and out-migration of African Americans, I will concentrate on the change of two crucial variables in the urban black experience—population change (urbanization), economic opportunities—and their relationship to each other over time. It may be argued that topics like roles of gentrification and racial discrimination are just as, or more, important in the study of migration and population change of black communities. However, these latter topics are well represented in the literature of war and urbanization, and none is more central to the analysis of patterns in African American migration than the two critical, but often neglected, variables that I have chosen to explore in this paper.

While the Second World War resulted in devastation throughout Europe and Asia, the war created a different kind of struggle in the United States. The nation's major cities had to deal

with mobilization of the American workforce across different state borders to meet the growing demands of wartime industries. During the wartime boom of World War II, from 1940 and 1947, some twenty-five million people (21% of the total American population) migrated to another county or state in search of new opportunities in the military and civilian sectors (Johnson, 1993). According to the Census Bureau in 1948, "Probably never before in the history of the United States has there been internal population movement of such magnitude as in the past seven eventful years" (U.S. Census, 1948, p. 1).

The war accelerated long-standing trends of industrialization, urbanization, and racial demography change. There were few incentives for Southern blacks to stay in the South in the decades following the American Civil War. Generations of discrimination and oppression of Southern blacks had resulted in educational deprivation, economic disadvantage, political weakness, and thousands of victims of racially charged southern mobs (Alexander 2017). Historically defined as the "Second Great Migration," the Second World War ignited an internal migration pattern of African Americans leaving the South for industrial cities of wartime production. The Second Great Migration, which lasted from 1940 to 1970, resulted in millions of African Americans moving to urban areas in search of wartime employment in burgeoning defense industries. In 1910, 90% of African Americans lived in rural areas of the southeastern United States (i.e., the South); one generation after the end of World War II, nearly 90% of them resided in urban areas throughout the United States, most often outside the South (Price-Spratlen 2008). By the end of the Second Great Migration, African Americans had become a highly urbanized population compared to the rest of American society. Throughout this period, common migration patterns for black people include urban industrial hubs like Seattle, New York,

Portland, and Oakland. And while many defense industries closed with the end of the war, most African American migrants decided to settle down in their respective wartime cities, increasing urban black population levels by starting families and promoting chain migration. Thus said, the rapid growth of defense industries during World War II created a sweeping impact that transformed the racial diversity of urban cities, altering the racial composition of urban centers to be blacker than ever before. For many historians, the Second World War served as a cornerstone event that established and accelerated the growth of black communities throughout urban America. It is worth noting, however, that although wartime employment increased the population of African Americans in urban locations at the time, the wartime boom did not take it to its modern levels.

In focusing on a single urban area, I hope to move beyond the structural dynamics of wartime cities to explore the long-term economic impact that the Second World War left on black migrants and their descendants in Oakland, California. In recent decades, Oakland's African American population has experienced a dramatic decrease in total population. The City of Oakland's black exodus is illustrated in the US Census Data, with Oakland's black population decreasing from 159,351 in 1980 to 109,471 as of 2010—a drop of 31.3%. Accordingly, proportionate to the total, the black population between 1980 and 2010 decreased from 47% to 28%. Thus, the percentage decrease of the black population in Oakland is not consistent with rising levels of black in-migration. It is important to note that Oakland's black exodus of African Americans cannot be explained by one variable alone, as there are many structural inequities that frustrate economic and migration patterns of black communities. Hence, the purpose of this research paper is not to explain every social and political dimension impacting Oakland's out-

migration of African Americans; but rather, the purpose of this research paper is to provide a historical and analytical approach into how shifting economic opportunities have impacted migration patterns of African Americans over the years. Specifically, this research paper will explore how changes in economic opportunities, and barriers of entry to said economic opportunities, from the 1940s to the 21st century, have impacted in-migration and out-migration patterns for black communities in Oakland, California. I see higher correlations between education and income level in 2020. I argue that Oakland's black exodus is due to the barriers of entry of a more competitive labor force in a post-industrial economy, being displaced by wealthier, working professionals with higher educational attainment.

The following sections will proceed as follows. Section II offers a comparative case study of Seattle and Portland to determine if Oakland's black in-migration and out-migration patterns are consistent with other wartime cities that economically benefited from the Second World War. With the burgeoning availability of wartime opportunities in shipyards, Section III analyzes the in-migration and ultimate establishment of Oakland's black community. Section IV explores the postwar period of 1950 to 1990, and how economic factors influenced chain migration and biological reproduction—taking Oakland's black population to its modern levels. Section V examines how Oakland's proximity to Silicon Valley negatively impacts its black community, forcing them to migrate out of Oakland. Finally, Section VI presents limitations to the study and concludes the paper, which is then followed by Figures and References at the end.

2. Seattle and Portland: A Comparative Case Study to Oakland

The Second World War brought black migration into different industrial hubs throughout America. When the expansion of wartime production exhausted local labor pools, the United States federal government began recruiting out-of-state workers for wartime industries in the Pacific Northwest. And while there was still racial discrimination present in wartime industries of the Pacific Northwest, the wartime economy brought about a mass migration of African Americans out of the South in search of opportunities not available in other parts of the country. By the end of the war in 1945, the Pacific Northwest region saw an increase in its total black population, with approximately 43,000 black workers and their families having migrated into the region (Taylor, 1981).

Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon became major industrial centers for ship and aircraft construction throughout the wartime economy of World War II. The Pacific Northwest region had approximately 88 shipyards, with 29 of those shipyards being in Seattle alone (Taylor 1981). Seattle's aircraft industry also boomed during World War II. In 1940, Boeing Aircraft employed approximately 4,000 workers. By the middle of the war in 1943, Boeing employed over 40,000 people in its main factories in Seattle (Taylor 1981). The ten-fold increase in Boeing's workforce illustrates the burgeoning demand for wartime goods, and the corresponding need for more workers to produce these goods. Because of the wartime demand, Seattle became an urban hotspot where thousands of black migrants primarily came to pursue economic opportunities in ship and aircraft industries. From 1940 to 1950, US Census Data shows that Seattle's black population grew by over 300%, from 3,789 to 15,666.

Southern blacks were confronted with the additional burden of Jim Crow laws and customs as well as frequent racially motivated violence. Compared to Southern blacks at the time, black children in Seattle were integrated in the same school systems as their white counterparts. So, like the black migrants in Oakland, much of Seattle's black migrants stayed after the war ended because although Seattle certainly had its share of social and professional racism, the South, by comparison, was hostile to African Americans. The establishment of Seattle's black community after the war is depicted in census data, with the total black population having increased from 15,666 in 1950 to 46,744 in 1980. Correspondingly illustrated, the black population from 1950 to 1980 increased from roughly 3.3% to 9.5% of Seattle's total population. In modern Seattle, the city's pattern of black migration has remained rather stagnant, with 2010 Census Data indicating a black population level of 48,315—roughly 8.3% of Seattle's total population.

Portland's black population is estimated to be around 1,900 in 1940 (Taylor 1981). Like Seattle, the wartime shipbuilding industry in Portland had attracted many African Americans; Quintard Taylor argues that Portland may have had as many as 21,000 blacks in 1945 (1981). Portland, however, was a less tolerant city for African Americans, whose black community never exceeded 2,500 prior to the wartime period (Fryer 2004). Portland's resistance towards black migrants is deeply ingrained in its state's racially discriminatory history. Although the 14th Amendment to the federal Constitution should have legally invalidated exclusion laws, Oregon's black exclusion laws were not fully repealed from the Bill of Rights within the Oregon State Constitution until 1926, passing with 62.5% of Oregon voters in favor. Oregon's white-dominated society and anti-black sentiments applied pressure on black wartime migrants from settling in Portland during the postwar period. From projecting black migrants as agents of crime

and violence to complaints about federal war housing projects, Portlanders did everything in their power to resist the integration of black wartime migrants (Fryer 2004). Evidently, two years after the Second World War ended in 1945, Portland's total black population had dropped to 12,000, and by 1950 it was down to 9,500. In comparison to its 1945 levels, Portland's black population had dropped by approximately 55% in just five years. And although Portland's African American population still had an approximate increase of roughly 1005% between 1940 and 1950, Portland's immediate out-migration during the postwar period is an area of question in regard to black out-migration patterns for wartime cities after the war. Compared to Seattle, Portland offered fewer economic opportunities for black people. Portland, for instance, did not retain as many defense-related opportunities in the Cold-War period as Seattle did (Taylor 1981). And because black migrants mainly migrated to urban cities in search for employment in defense sectors, the decrease in wartime production negatively impacted Portland's black population. Data from the Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest reveals that of the 4,500 African Americans in the Portland labor force in 1947, only one-third were employed. When compared to Seattle and Oakland, Portland's black exodus in the immediate postwar period indicates that the intensity of anti-black sentiments and the availability of economic opportunities are significant factors that impact black out-migration patterns.

Seattle and Portland serve as comparative case studies depicting that although urban cities have a similar in-migration pattern of African Americans due to the wartime economy of World War II, urban patterns of black out-migration are distinct from city to city. In Seattle, modern black populations have remained rather consistent with 1980 levels. And in Portland, the black community underwent an immediate exodus after the war, with its total population slowly

increasing over time. My findings indicate that the availability of wartime employment was the determinant factor that influenced black in-migration patterns into urban cities during the 1940s. In addition, my findings further indicate that black out-migration patterns from wartime cities are more complex and distinct due to the differing socioeconomic circumstances of each individual city.

3. Oakland's Wartime Boom: Black In-migration of the 1940s

As supported through this paper's Introduction and Section II, the Second World War set into motion the greatest defense buildup in American history, giving rise to internal migration patterns of Southern blacks to wartime cities throughout the nation. Supported by massive federal government subsidies to keep up with wartime demand, Oakland experienced an economic boom that accelerated the increase of its total black population. And while the wartime migration of African Americans does not explain Oakland's modern black population levels, wartime in-migration established black communities which furthered black population growth well into the postwar period. Thus, in this section, I analyze the impact of the 1940s wartime employment on black in-migration into Oakland, a cornerstone economic event which established the foundational variables necessary for black population growth to occur after the Second World War.

The United States federal government played a crucial role in Oakland's wartime boom of the Second World War. Throughout America's involvement in the war, defense spending rose from 1.4% of GDP in 1940 to over 37% in 1945. And of the \$360 billion in total defense expenditures in the period from 1940 to 1946, the United States government spent approximately \$35 billion

in California, accounting for 45% of the personal income of state residents (Johnson 1993). The exponential increase in defense spending created a plethora of employment opportunities in wartime cities throughout the nation. Located midway down the Pacific Coast at the terminus of three transcontinental railroads, Oakland was a logical supply and distribution point for the Pacific war basin (Johnson 1993). Hence, the City of Oakland received millions of dollars in federal funding that helped catapult the economic growth of its wartime industries. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the earliest signs of the defense boom appeared in Oakland and Alameda in 1938, when the federal government selected two sites for new military installations as part of the rearmament program (Johnson 1993). Construction of the Alameda Naval Base (which is right across from the Port of Oakland) and the nearby Naval Supply Base in Oakland began in 1938. These projects were soon followed by plans for new army facilities along Oakland's outer harbor, and by the end of 1940, the federal government had spent more than \$60 million to construct these facilities (Johnson 1993). Due to the wartime economy, for the first time ever in Bay Area history, the federal government provided more jobs than did state and local governments combined. Thus said, the federal government's increase in defense spending set the stage for a wartime boom to occur in Oakland.

While Oakland initially relied on the labor force within Northern California to meet the booming demand of the defense industry, as labor shortages intensified, employers turned to the federal government to coordinate industrial production and labor recruitment. With the federal War Manpower Commission launching recruitment programs to bring in labor from other states and into Oakland, World War II set into motion a massive rearrangement of the American population—increasing Oakland's racial diversity and transforming spatial relations. World War

II migration patterns into Oakland occurred not as a single event but as successive waves as the war continued. From 1940 to 1944, wartime recruitment of out-of-state workers increased Oakland's total population from 302,164 to 345,345, an increase of 14.3%. Along the same lines, Oakland's black population increased from 8,462 in 1940 to 21,770 by 1944, an increase of 157.3%. African Americans that migrated to the West in search of wartime opportunities predominantly came from states in the western point of the South: Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma (Johnson 1993). When compared to African Americans in the Midwest, the black community in the rural South experienced worse forms of racial discriminatory practices through segregationist "Jim Crow" policies. Southern blacks were forced to attend inferior schools, sit in the backs of buses, and were refused service in many establishments. Those who complained about the Jim Crow laws were often met with violence or even killed. Therefore, through logic alone, Southern blacks had a larger incentive to migrate to wartime cities than their black counterparts in the Midwest or other regions of the United States. Oakland's increase in its black population during the Second World War represents the atrocities of the South, which has stripped away the political power and social opportunities of Southern blacks. And although wartime Oakland had its fair share of racial discrimination, Southern blacks still migrated because they viewed Oakland as a much better alternative to the racial oppression and segregation practices that were present in the South.

Primarily distribution and processing centers for raw materials in the prewar era, Oakland developed into a major shipbuilding center to supply the wartime demand of World War II. As the nation's number one shipbuilding center, the Bay Area received nearly \$5 billion in contracts from the navy and the Maritime Commission (Johnson 1993). The major source of wartime

industrial growth in Oakland was shipbuilding. Up until mid-1942, shipyard employers hired white male migrants over black and women residents; by the fall, however, critical labor demands opened the shipyard gates to these workers as well (Johnson 1993). With the assistance of federal wartime programs like the War Labor Board (WLB), black people who migrated into Oakland were recruited into wartime industries to fill the labor shortage created by World War II. It is estimated that in the Bay Area, about 70% of the employed black migrants worked in the shipyard industry (Cornford 1995). And unlike their white counterparts who often counter migrated back to their respective home states after peak wartime production in mid-1943, black employment continued to grow as black migrants filled their jobs. Consequently said, while black workers made up less than three percent of the Bay Area's shipyard labor force in 1942, that figure rose to seven percent by the following year (Cornford 1995).

Migrant women were crucial in the development of Oakland's wartime economy and the establishment of its black community. As labor shortages continued, in the summer of 1942, East Bay shipyards began hiring and recruiting women workers. Local women moved into the newly accessible war jobs, but migrants constituted the largest new female labor pool (Cornford 1995). Overall, in 1944, migrant women made up 46% of all Bay Area working women while they represented only 27% of the total female population (Johnson 1993). Among women workers however, the pattern of black women recruitment into wartime industries was somewhat different due to the double barriers of race and sex. Until late in the war, black women were excluded from shipyard employment except as janitors, cafeteria workers, and restroom attendants; but beginning in 1944, black women were hired as burners, chippers, and shipfitters' helpers in East Bay yards (Johnson 1993). They were, however, more successful in other

industries, such as military supply, railroads, and canneries, all of which offered roughly half the wages of shipbuilding. But despite earning less than shipbuilding workers, the economic opportunities offered for black women in Oakland were much better than those offered in the South. Throughout the Second Great Migration, it is estimated that for every 100 black women that migrated into the San Francisco Bay Area, only 94 black men made the trip (Johnson 1993). Because black migration in the 1940s was dominated by the female sex, this set the stage for an increase in Oakland's black population levels through migrants that settled down and started families.

The availability of wartime employment and the promise of social opportunities impacted in-migration patterns of African Americans into Oakland, California. Because most black migrants came from the South, Jim Crow laws and racially charged violence discouraged patterns of counter migration. And while black workers in wartime industries were later laid off after the war ended, California offered social and political freedoms that even poverty could not take away. According to the surveys the Chamber of Commerce conducted in Bay Area shipyards, 75% to 80% of migrant workers stayed in the area after the war (Johnson 1993). For black wartime migrants in particular, the rate was even higher, with approximately 85% of them remaining permanently (Johnson 1993). Originally making up just 2.4% of the total population in 1940, wartime migration increased Oakland's black population to 6.3% of the total by 1944. And because Oakland experienced a rather balanced in-migration pattern of both black men and women throughout the Second Great Migration, the black migrants that decided to settle down in Oakland helped set the stage for future black population growth to occur after the end of World War II. Ultimately, Oakland's wartime migrants established the necessary environment that

shaped the growth of the city's black community—increasing the black population to its modern levels.

4. The Postwar Period: Taking it to Modern Levels

In this section, I explore factors which impacted Oakland's black population growth in the decades between World War II and the 21st century. The first wave of black migration during the wartime boom of World War II set the stage for Oakland's black population to increase in the postwar period between 1950 and 1990. Like their parents, the offsprings of the first wave of wartime migrants also established themselves in Oakland, further increasing the black population through offsprings of their own. And due to the sizable black community established by wartime migrants of the 1940s, Oakland remained a desirable location for African Americans to immigrate to. Specifically, African Americans that remained in the Jim Crow South were encouraged through economic "push" factors to emigrate and through economic "pull" factors to settle in Oakland. And because of the availability of economic and social opportunities for black people as compared to other regions of the United States, Oakland's black population growth in the postwar period between 1950 and 1990 can be explained through successive waves of chain migration and biological reproduction.

After the war ended, some wartime migrants in Oakland went back to their home states for short-term visits, only to find a lack of employment opportunities and racially charged restrictions. Crushed by the harsh realities of the Jim Crow South and livelihood outside of California, black migrants came back to Oakland—bringing friends and relatives along. Unlike white wartime migrants, black migrants did not head for Oakland in large numbers until the postwar period,

when wartime employment in Oakland provided the financial means to assist with the relocation costs of friends and relatives from the South. From 1950 to 1990, the postwar period after the Second World War triggered an even bigger wave of black in-migration from different regions of the United States and into Oakland. Oakland's total black population increased from 21,770 in 1944 to 47,562 in 1950—making up 12.4% of the city's total population. In the postwar period of 1950 to 1990, much of the internal chain migration pattern into Oakland was self-initiated by its black wartime community. Black wartime migrants of the 1940s sent money back to friends and family who still resided in the states in which they originated, utilizing that money to relocate to Oakland and surrounding areas. And while African Americans migrated into Oakland from different regions of the United States throughout the postwar period, most chain migration patterns stemmed from Southern states where wartime migrants originated: Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, and Oklahoma (Johnson 1993). Among the black migrants who came to Oakland, some had relocated from shipyards in Portland and Seattle, where layoffs of black workers had been more severe (Johnson 1993). Even more so than wartime migration, this second wave of black migrants dramatically increased Oakland's black community over the postwar period, taking the black population to its modern levels.

Despite wartime industries declining after the war, the availability of economic opportunities was a primary “pull” factor for the new migrants. Thus said, the black migrants that came after the war, in many ways, had similar motives to those who had migrated during the wartime boom of the 1940s. For African Americans in general, the economic opportunities outside of the South were more plentiful and lucrative than those within the South. In Figure 1, Lance Freeman (2019), a professor of City and Regional Planning, and Sociology at the University of

Pennsylvania, compares the occupational status of African Americans in the North and the South between 1940 and 1960. Census data on occupational prestige as measured by the Socioeconomic Indicator and average earnings by occupation show Southern black migrants were in significantly more prestigious and remunerative occupations than their black counterparts who remained in the South (Freeman 2019). While the socioeconomic indicator between African Americans in the South and North did not differ much, the gap in occupational earnings widened slightly between 1940 and 1960—indicating that blacks who migrated to the urban North earned more than those in the South.

If the economic pull of better job opportunities were not enough for Southern blacks, the mechanization of southern agriculture provided an additional “push” factor to migrate. Due to the impact of slavery and a lack of education, most Southern black males were limited to finding employment in the agricultural sector (Freeman 2019). According to data from the Farm Labor Survey (FLS) of USDA’s National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS), the average annual employment of hired farmworkers declined from 2.33 million to 1.15 million between the years 1950 to 1990, a 51% reduction (Figure 2). Those who worked traditional forms of labor in the agricultural sector suffered. Southern cotton pickers were laid off because machines were more efficient. In 1950, more than 90% of all cotton was picked by hand, but roughly 12 years later, this number had dropped to less than 30% (Freeman 2019). Consequently, the proportion of Southern black males employed in agriculture dropped from 29.7% in 1950 to a mere 8.5% by 1970 (Freeman 2019). Due to the lack of employment opportunities in Southern agriculture, millions of blacks pushed to leave the South during the postwar period, migrating to urban cities like Oakland, where more economic opportunities were available.

While the end of the Second World War resulted in the decline of Oakland's shipbuilding industry, the Korean War, the Cold War, and the Space Race led to massive government spending on new defense technology—bringing new forms of employment opportunities to Oakland, mainly in areas of manufacturing. Because the Bay Area is home to nationally renowned academic institutions like UC Berkeley and Stanford University, the concentration of a highly skilled labor force forged the Bay Area into a semiconductor and electronics powerhouse in the postwar period. During the 1960s California received 20% of all defense-related prime contracts of \$10,000 or more and 44% of all National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) subcontract awards (Saxenian 1983). And because roughly 20% of the cost of an aircraft was accounted for by electronic equipment, and at least 30% of missile systems was accounted for by electronics (Saxenian 1983), the general economy of the Bay Area continued benefitting from federal defense spending even after the war ended. In addition to federal spending in research and development of defense technology, Oakland's infrastructure of a large industrial port, an expanding international airport, terminals of transcontinental railroads, and the convergence of six major highways allowed it to brought jobs into the community. And through Oakland's infrastructure of international trade, the black community of Oakland benefitted from low-skilled employment opportunities that were available in areas such as the port of Oakland or manufacturing-related industries.

The bottom line behind Oakland's black in-migration patterns throughout the postwar period is that the economic opportunities and social liberties present in the Bay Area were much better than those in the Jim Crow South. In due time, economic pull and push factors brought

Oakland's total black population to its modern levels. Encompassing just 12.4% of the total population in 1950, the black population made up 47% of the city's total in 1980, with 159,351 African American residents. However, in terms of total population numbers, the city's black population peaked at 163,526 in 1990, with their proportional levels being diluted to 43.9% due to an influx of Asian in-migration. As Silicon Valley shifted to a more skilled workforce to meet the demands of the digital age, the increase of Asian migrants into Oakland is indicative of the technologically related employment opportunities for educated professionals willing to migrate into the modern Bay Area. For the next two decades after 1990, the Bay Area established itself as the technological hub of the world, negatively impacting Oakland's black community—who are proportionately less likely to have the education necessary to qualify for employment opportunities in tech companies. Thus said, after 1990, Oakland's black community underwent a massive exodus, decreasing the city's black population from peak levels.

5. The Tech Hub of the World: Oakland's Black Exodus

As the Bay Area shifted from an industrial economy to a post-industrial economy, the relative importance of manufacturing decreases and that of services, information, and research grows. Used to describe the emerging technology hub located in the Bay Area in the 1950s, the term "Silicon Valley" was inherited through the region's use of silicon to develop semiconductors. But over the decades, as Silicon Valley shifted from the development and manufacturing of hardware to the innovative research and programming of software, the demand for a highly skilled workforce has pushed out individuals that lack the technical background to meet the region's increasingly competitive labor market. Thus said, in this Section, I analyze how Silicon

Valley's establishment as the technology hub of the world negatively impacts employment opportunities for black communities in Oakland, leading to its black exodus from 1990 onwards.

Because black populations have historically been proportionately less likely to have a college education than white or Asian individuals, the demand for a skilled and college-educated workforce to meet the employment pre-requisites of Silicon Valley has crippled Oakland's black community. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates in 2018, 49% of Bay Area's population over the age of 25 held a bachelor's degree. Compared to major regions across the country, the Bay Area Council Economic Institute claims that the Bay Area leads the nation in terms of the share of people who hold bachelor's degrees. However, examining educational attainment among racial and ethnic groups shows wide disparities. In the county that encompasses the City of Oakland, Alameda County, only 28% of black Bay Area residents over the age of 25 hold a bachelor's degree, compared to 46% bachelor's degree holders among 25+ white residents. The need for a college education to break into the lucrative employment opportunities offered in the Bay Area's IT industry is evidenced in Rebecca Franklin's research article published in 2021. According to Franklin, "black workers are the least represented minority group in the Silicon Valley high-tech workforce, constituting only 2% of the workforce at many of the top firms" such as Apple, Facebook, and Google. Specifically looking into Google, a company often praised for its commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workforce, the Google Diversity Annual Report 2018 shows that only 2.5% of its workforce is black, whereas 36.3% and 53.1% of it are Asian and white.

The establishment of Silicon Valley as the tech hub of the world increased financial inequality in marginalized communities close to its geographical proximity. While economists and the general population are familiar with the growing wage gap between the college-educated and those with less education, few are familiar with the reality in which communities and local labor markets are also diverging economically at an accelerated pace. Enrico Moretti, an Economics Professor at UC Berkeley, finds that due to the “clustering effect,” cities with many college-educated workers and innovative employers started attracting more of the same, and cities with a less educated workforce and less innovative employers—such as traditional manufacturing—started losing ground (2012). Communities unable to keep up with the more competitive labor market of a post-industrial society are, in short, pushed to migrate out of the Bay Area. Due to Oakland’s rich history as an industrial powerhouse of manufacturing, this general trend of out-migration is evidenced in Oakland’s black community after the year 1990, the decade in which the internet was accessible to the general public; the introduction of the internet spurred research and innovation by high-tech firms in the Bay Area, increasing labor demands for an educated workforce. With a population of 163,526 in 1990, or 43.9% of the total, Oakland’s black community shrank to 142,460 by the year 2000. And by the year 2010, Oakland’s black population had dropped to 109,471, comprising just 28% of the total population. And while Oakland’s total black population levels have remained rather consistent since 2010, due to the in-migration of Asian and white individuals, its relative proportion to the total has decreased to 24.4% as of 2019. Originally having migrated for wartime and manufacturing employment opportunities, Oakland’s black exodus between the years 1990 and 2010 indicates that its black community was negatively impacted by the region’s changing labor demand for a workforce with an educated background. And while one could argue that black people can find employment

opportunities outside of the IT sector, the high-paying salaries of tech workers increases the cost of living in the general region—driving out black communities unable to keep up with rising costs.

In combination with transportation services provided by tech companies for its employees working afar from the office, the inadequate supply of housing compared to the number of jobs in Silicon Valley caused tech workers to migrate into surrounding cities. The high-tech boom of the 1990s left the Bay Area with an “hourglass” shaped economy; at the top, there was an expansion in employment among highly skilled young professionals, many “living large” and bidding up prices for existing housing (Dean 2002). This strained Oakland’s housing market, making it financially difficult for marginalized communities. Most of the Bay Area’s high-tech employees are white and Asian men. Among technical employees, few are women, and even fewer are African American. The result of this hourglass economy is a serious housing crisis that disproportionately impacts Oakland’s black community, who are proportionately less likely to have the monetary luxury to afford Oakland’s increasing rental prices than those with an Asian or white background.

In addition, despite increases in real incomes, tenants in the Bay Area today have less income remaining after payment of rent than tenants did in 1960 (Barton 2019). Stephen E. Barton, the Housing Director for the City of Berkeley, documents that although Bay Area tenants with incomes at the 25th percentile in 2008 had incomes 21% higher than those of 1960, tenants at the 25th percentile spent 48% of their income on housing, as compared to 29% for tenants in 1960 (Figure 3). The data is also in agreement with the fact that higher educational attainment

correlates with a higher income, showing that Bay Area tenants with incomes at the 50th percentile have a higher proportion of households with a bachelor's degree than those in the 25th percentile. Nonetheless, in the modern Bay Area, buying power remaining after paying housing costs has drastically decreased since 1960. This observation indicates that Oakland's black population was able to manage rental prices up until the dotcom boom of the 1990s, when high-tech professionals started pouring into the Bay Area and increasing the cost of living. Then after 1990, because black workers generally earn less than white or Asian workers, the Bay Area's hourglass economy effectively squeezed much of Oakland's black community out of the housing market, forcing them to relocate out of the city altogether.

6. Conclusion

From the wartime boom of the 1940s to the exodus beginning in the 1990s, the availability of economic opportunities has impacted the in-migration and out-migration patterns of Oakland's black population. While African Americans were initially successful in migrating to Oakland and establishing themselves within the city for several decades, the downfall of Oakland's black community is due to the decline of unskilled jobs as the region shifted from an industrial to a post-industrial economy. Oakland's black population was disproportionately impacted by the loss of unskilled labor. And as the high wages of the Bay Area's tech sector continued to increase, Oakland's black community was eventually squeezed out of the housing market, forcing them to relocate to a different city altogether. Therefore, I have come to a general conclusion that the underlying reason the black exodus occurred is because the lack of investment in public education (and retraining programs) during the postwar period made it difficult for Oakland's black workforce to prepare for the demands of the new labor market.

While I examined how the access to employment opportunities impacts out-migration patterns of black Oakland residents, the limitation of my paper is that Oakland's black exodus was also impacted by factors beyond the scope of my research. For instance, two important variables that are highly likely to have impacted Oakland's black exodus is the use of historical redlining policies and racially restrictive covenants. Both variables, in combination, has made it difficult for Oakland's African American community to buy and pass down property during the postwar period, restricting them to homes in undesirable neighborhoods if they wanted to do so.

According to the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances, the median homeowner has 40 times the household wealth of a renter, \$254,900 for the former compared to \$6270 for the latter.

Homeowners are wealthier than renters at every income level, and when several generations of the black community are locked out of purchasing homes in desirable locations, it cripples future generations of African Americans because they are forced to be renters rather than homeowners. Further research, however, needs to be conducted to understand the full outcomes on Oakland's black out-migration.

Focusing on the impact on education in relation to the new labor market of a post-industrial economy, it is imperative that the City of Oakland implements equitable policies for the future wellbeing of its black community. To address the issue of a lack of black employment in the post-industrial occupations surrounding Oakland, Oakland needs to invest in the public education for black children. And while the past cannot be changed, it is important for Oakland's black community to look forward — and the only way to do so is to educate the future generation of black community leaders.

Figures

Figure 1

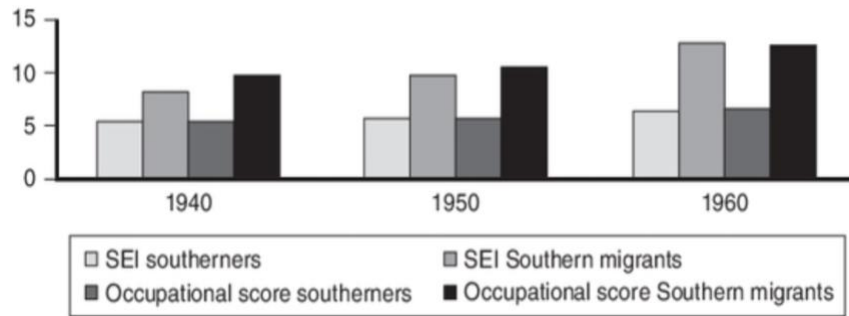


Figure 2

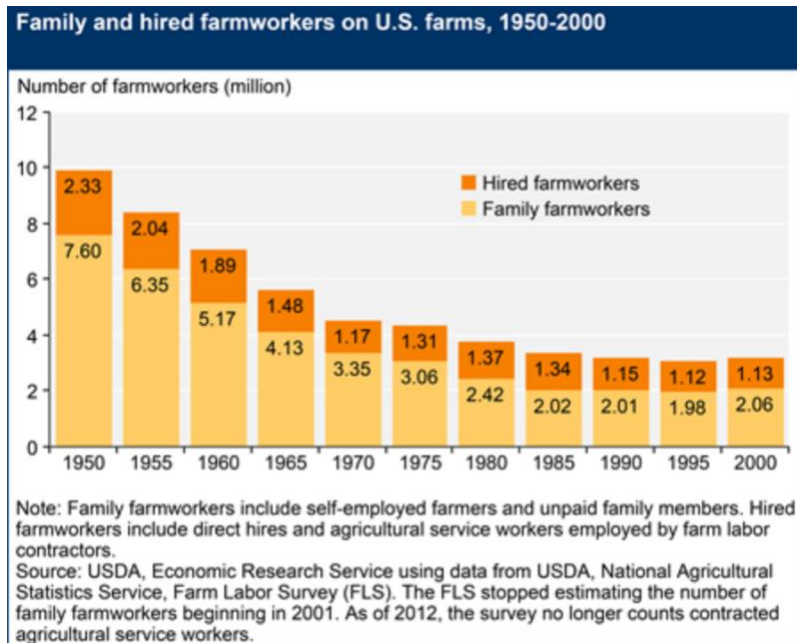


Figure 3

Incomes and Gross Rent, 1960 and 2008 (Constant 2008 Dollars)						
	1960		2008		1960	2008
Bay Area	25 th percentile		25 th percentile		Median (50 th percentile)	Median (50 th percentile)
Tenant Income	\$19,550		\$23,750		\$36,840	\$50,090
Rent	\$467		\$943		\$623	\$1,273
Rent/Income	29%		48%		20%	31%
Income-Rent	\$13,940		\$12,434		\$29,365	\$34,815
% of BA households	10.8%		10.20%		21.5%	20.3%

Source: 1960 Census, 2006–2008 American Community Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics, author's calculations.

Note: In the Bay Area tenant households in the 25th percentile and the 50th percentile income levels made up nearly the same proportion of the same percentile households in 2008 (41 percent) as they did in 1960 (43 percent), so these results are not caused by a substantial decline in the proportion of tenants.

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