



Afro-Caribbean Human Capital in the United States

Immigrant Success in Early Twentieth-Century Philadelphia

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I want you to remember these words and apply the philosophy of them in your daily life. Most of us go through life blaming our stars, attributing our disappointments, our setbacks to some one or to some invisible cause—superstition. Brutus blamed the stars, he thought his star was one of ill omen; so he blamed everything on his ill-luck, to the fate in his star. But we have Shakespeare’s advice—“it is not in our stars, but in ourselves.”

—Marcus Garvey in *The Blackman* newspaper, Jamaica, June 8, 1929

Critics of the American dream fixate on the nation’s checkered past to explain the disparate outcomes of today. A prejudicial system, critics contend, mires helpless Americans in poverty and hopelessness, the victims of socioeconomic structures beyond their control. The American dream, however, is not dead.¹ Nor has it been out of reach for disadvantaged groups in the past. Black Americans, Caribbean, Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, and most recently Hispanic communities have demonstrated that self-reliance, not government-dependence, provides the pathway to climbing the socioeconomic ladder.² What can we learn from their exemplary lives and community resilience? How can their self-sufficiency provide a model for empowering Americans in the twenty-first century?

The support given today must lead to independence tomorrow. The US government can and should prioritize creating sustainable pathways to self-sufficiency rather than perpetuating dependency through handouts or unearned loans. The past illuminates the path forward.

This study examines an overlooked chapter in the narrative of immigration to the United States: the story of Afro-Caribbean immigrants who came from the British West Indies and US possessions in the Caribbean to Philadelphia in the early twentieth century.³ Arriving before the significant legislative changes brought by the Immigration and National Act of 1965, Afro-Caribbean

immigrants excelled in comparison to their contemporary Philadelphians. This study draws on historical census data and archival records to show how a combination of selectivity among immigrants and specific cultural practices facilitated their socioeconomic rise during a period marked by considerable racial prejudice and systemic barriers. In turn, the historical success of Afro-Caribbean immigrants—characterized by their education, ambition, work ethic, intact families, faith, and community solidarity—offers actionable lessons for public policy.

By understanding how this group achieved socioeconomic success, policymakers can develop targeted policies to replicate positive outcomes. To apply these lessons to today, we must focus on educational opportunities, updating the current immigration system, government-sponsored vocational training and skill development programs, supporting small family businesses, and incentivizing marriage and intact families. These policies must also be marketed effectively to reach the masses. By implementing these policies, we can attempt to mirror the conditions that allowed Afro-Caribbeans to thrive in early twentieth-century Philadelphia for both immigrant families and native-born Americans.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The West Indies, located in the North Atlantic Ocean and the Caribbean Sea, shares a long history with the United States, dating back to America’s colonial era as part of the British Empire.⁴ By the eighteenth century, Philadelphia had become a notable point of entry by West Indian émigrés.⁵ Following Britain’s passing of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, free Black West Indians trickled into Philadelphia and notably held occupations such as composers, caterers, and barbers. Post-Civil War, the foreign-born Black population (almost entirely Caribbean in origin) in the United States experienced a fivefold increase, from 4,067 to 20,336, between 1850 and 1900.⁶ These late-nineteenth-century Afro-Caribbean immigrants, skilled in professions such as craftsmanship, teaching, law, and medicine, established a reputation for intelligence and competence. As Hubert Harrison (known as Harlem’s “Black Socrates”) put it: “It was taken for granted that every West Indian immigrant was a paragon of intelligence and a man of birth and breeding.”⁷

The migration rate accelerated dramatically as “the number of black people, especially Caribbeans, who migrated to the United States increased dramatically, from a trickle of 411 in 1899 to a flood of 12,243 per year by 1924, the high point of early black migration.”⁸ As word spread of opportunities to succeed beyond their respective islands, the drive to leave their homes greatly increased among the people of the West Indies.

The harsh conditions in the Caribbean, coupled with the expansion of the US economy at the turn of the twentieth century, triggered this mass exodus from the islands. The average agricultural worker in the impoverished West Indies lived “hand to mouth without reserves for times of scarcity and illness,” struggling even to afford to buy milk.⁹ The British Caribbean lost its status as the major sugar supplier of the world to Cuba and Brazil, severely cutting male employment in the sugar industry.¹⁰ This period also saw Afro-Jamaican peasants and farmers grappling with land consolidation, disparate land prices, deteriorating labor conditions, urban

migration, and regressive taxation. That Blacks in the West Indies had their own land and engaged in struggles with the government raises the question of their history with land.

To understand Afro-Caribbean immigration, one must consider the experiences they brought with them to the United States. A prevailing theory articulated by Eleanor Marie Lawrence Brown suggests that many Black West Indians arrived in the United States with valuable experience in land ownership and market participation, while African Americans often faced barriers to similar opportunities.¹¹ Their experiences with land and commerce in the Caribbean equipped West Indians with the knowledge to navigate new environments and build a reputation in Philadelphia.

During slavery, provision grounds (small plots allowed by masters for enslaved people to grow food for themselves) existed for some Black West Indians (in Jamaica, but not in Barbados, Antigua, and St. Kitts and Nevis), just as they existed for some African Americans.¹² After the abolition of slavery in 1833, however, “spotty” but reliable West Indian Census data point to the emergence of a population of Black property owners.¹³ In the 1921 Jamaican Census, for instance, the majority of adult men labeled themselves as “planters” (suggesting they worked on their own farms) rather than “laborers” (meaning that they worked on other people’s farms).¹⁴ On the other hand, Blacks in the United States accumulated between 15 and 19 million acres of land by 1910.¹⁵ Gaining land only fifty years after emancipation was a remarkable feat despite oppressive laws such as the Black Codes. After 1910, systemic racism, discriminatory policies, general illiteracy among rural Blacks, and migration led to a 90 percent decline in Black-owned land by the twentieth century’s end.¹⁶ While African Americans struggled with widespread land loss, Blacks in the Caribbean, though still facing challenges, did not experience the same systemic oppression leading to widespread land dispossession.

Among both West Indians, particularly those from Jamaica, and African Americans from South Carolina, certain groups actively participated in market activities during slavery, gaining valuable experience as sellers and buyers. Enslaved African Americans in South Carolina engaged in commerce on plantations and in urban centers like Charleston and Georgetown, where they used their purchasing power as “vendors and hucksters” to trade along riverways, ports, and country roads.¹⁷ In rural Georgetown, advancements in rice cultivation techniques afforded enslaved people free time, which they used to build independent economies by selling produce and goods. Similarly, in West Indian colonies such as Jamaica and Barbados, the enslaved adopted their own marketing activities, despite colonial restrictions. Known as “hagglers” or “higglers,” they participated in vibrant Sunday markets, earning income and establishing economic roles that provided a degree of autonomy and resilience within the confines of slavery.

Unlike their counterparts in the Jim Crow South, Black people in the Caribbean did not have to deal with the same level of violent, systemic oppression that led to widespread land loss after slavery. However, it is important to note that Black migration to northern cities, including Philadelphia, came from both the Upper and Lower South. Blacks in the Upper South faced fewer obstacles than those in the Lower South when acquiring land, while northern Blacks, especially those who were free before the Civil War, had access to more wealth and education.

This created a persistent “free-enslaved gap” in economic outcomes. Afro-Caribbeans, who did not face Jim Crow laws, would later find themselves competing with northern and southern Blacks, as well as Whites and Asians, all with varying levels of privilege and access to resources.

While Black Caribbeans may not have encountered virulent racist laws, their migration to places such as Philadelphia exposed them to a diverse intraracial competition. This diversity reflected the different struggles that Blacks from the Caribbean, Upper and Lower South, and the North experienced before they found themselves in the same city, each shaped by unique land acquisition and social mobility histories. While Eleanor Marie Lawrence Brown’s theory emphasizes the market acumen and land ownership experiences of Afro-Caribbeans as a foundation for their later success in American cities, African Americans had similar, albeit more restricted, experiences with land and commerce. Thus, while both groups had experience with land and market participation, the full story of Afro-Caribbean success involves additional factors beyond these shared experiences.

While Black Caribbeans may not have faced the same level of systemic oppression as African Americans in the Jim Crow South, their journey to economic stability was still shaped by various institutional challenges. In addition to the severe socioeconomic hardships facing the Caribbean, Jamaica’s would-be middle class was further affected when the government decided in 1911 to eliminate the competitive Civil Service Exam at which Black youths had been excelling, practically putting an end to “the dark-skinned bright children of the peasantry . . . entering the service.”¹⁸ A nepotistic appointment system replaced the exam, which favored the children of Whites and lighter-skinned Blacks, making social mobility markedly more difficult for the peasant and working-class population.

Amid widespread poverty, Afro-Caribbeans still strove to obtain an education. The literacy rate in Jamaica soared from 31.3 percent in 1861 to 62.3 percent in 1911, and grade school enrollment for children between the ages of five and fourteen notably increased.¹⁹ The increase in literacy and education, alongside a lack of opportunity, however, made remaining in Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean a bleak prospect.

In Barbados, constrained by its small size, scarce land, low wages, and declining sugar industry, about 150,000 people emigrated between 1861 and 1921, nearly equal to its entire population from 1861.²⁰ Natural disasters, disease, and outright starvation further pushed people to flee the West Indies. Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua suffered from economic hardships so severe that malnutrition became widespread, infant mortality increased, and starvation was common. Adding to the despair, the West Indies was ravaged by droughts, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, and cyclones with unusual frequency and intensity between 1880 and 1920. Outbreaks of diseases, such as typhoid and dysentery, followed in the wake of many of these disasters. These dire circumstances compelled West Indians, from the poor to the aspiring middle class, to seek greener pastures, including Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

At the turn of the century, Philadelphia’s population grew in size from half a million to 1.5 million between 1890 and 1910, driven by immigrants from Europe and African Americans fleeing the Jim Crow South. Between 1870 and 1900, the city’s Black population

had grown from 25,000 to 65,000, making up about 5 percent of the city's inhabitants at the start of the twentieth century.²¹ Philadelphia was a massive improvement from the Jim Crow South. Still, Blacks would inhabit a segregated city, in which racism limited employment opportunities. Black Americans had fought hard in courts and "[took] advantage of a strong federal Civil Rights Act passed in 1875 to mount a spate of suits that effectively desegregated much of Philadelphia," paving the way for future generations, including Afro-Caribbean immigrants, to settle and find opportunities within a transformed landscape.²² Thanks to large-scale industrialization and succeeding waves of immigration, Philadelphia became the third most populous city in the nation in the first half of the twentieth century.²³ The mid-Atlantic's major industries, including textiles, locomotive manufacturing, shipbuilding, iron and steel production, and sugar refining, were all centered in the City of Brotherly Love. Philadelphia was fittingly dubbed "the workshop of the world," and it was in this highly competitive environment that Afro-Caribbean immigrants would find themselves.

EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

From the time of their arrival in the early 1900s, Black newspapers and community leaders recognized Afro-Caribbeans in Philadelphia as a distinguished and notably educated group. This reputation aligned with Philadelphia's long-standing Black community, which had similarly valued education as a pathway to professional and social advancement. From the late nineteenth century, Philadelphia's Black community pursued education vigorously, leading to notable achievements in civil service and beyond. This commitment to education was particularly evident among Philadelphia's emerging Black middle class.²⁴ At times, Black educators, clerks, and other civil servants outperformed their White peers on civil service and educational qualifying exams in Philadelphia, reinforcing the community's dedication to education as a path to socioeconomic advancement. For example, Robert Ale set a record on the Pennsylvania State Qualifying Examination for Physicians in 1897.²⁵ At the same time, some Black students alongside Whites "were recruited from such places and manual-training schools, miraculously hurdling entrance exams in Latin."²⁶ Institutions like the Institute for Colored Youth fostered a culture of intellectual growth and literacy, with significant Black representation in fields like law, teaching, and civil service by the early 1900s. This shared commitment to education made both native Black Philadelphians and Afro-Caribbeans valued members of the local workforce.

Many of their Black contemporaries believed that education was a key factor in the socioeconomic success of West Indians in Philadelphia. Men and women "from the West Indies were [initially] received with open arms . . . and most of them became leaders in church, educational, and industrial fields."²⁷ Such a reputation led the Black-owned newspaper the *Philadelphia Tribune* to declare, "Right here in Philadelphia, we can point with pride to the West Indians whom we have proudly followed because of their profound knowledge and advanced methods of teaching in the field in which they work."²⁸ Their education not only signaled competency and reliability but also made them highly valued. It is for this very reason, according to the Pennsylvania newspaper the *York Daily*, that "American business houses, as a rule, are glad to employ British West Indian[s]. . . They are well educated [and] trained on responsibility from [their] earliest youth."²⁹ They may not have had the knowledge of the typical American clerk, but they had skills the latter lacked, which, in their employer's eyes, more than compensated.³⁰

Take literacy as an example. Using literacy rates as a proxy for educational attainment (as the latter was not recorded in the twentieth century's first three US Censuses) reveals that Black West Indians had literacy rates of 83 percent, 100 percent, and 85 percent in the 1900, 1910, and 1920 US Censuses, respectively.³¹ In addition to this, the literacy rate in later years for Black West Indians was higher than that of native-born Black Pennsylvanians and on par with native-born White Pennsylvanians. By the 1930 census, Afro-Caribbeans living in Philadelphia had a literacy rate of approximately 100 percent, while native-born Black Americans living in Philadelphia were at approximately 96 percent; native White Pennsylvanians approximately 99.62 percent; native Black Pennsylvanians were at approximately 98 percent; and approximately 96 percent of native-born Black Southerners living in Philadelphia were literate.³² The same trend was observed in New York by James Weldon Johnson when, in 1930, he said that there was practically "no illiteracy among [immigrants from the British West Indies]," with many having "a sound English common school education."³³

The literacy rates of these West Indians in Philadelphia, however, stood in stark contrast to the compatriots they left behind on the various islands. According to the Education Commission of 1932 (barring Jamaica), over 40 percent of the West Indian population was still illiterate.³⁴ In Jamaica, as late as the mid-twentieth century (according to the 1946 West Indian Census), the illiteracy rate for those over the age of ten was 23.9 percent.³⁵ The Virgin Islands had an illiteracy rate of 16.1 percent in 1936, according to the *1942 Britannica Book of the Year*.³⁶ In this regard, the group that left for the United States certainly did not reflect the average West Indian.

Afro-Caribbeans carried with them to Philadelphia the strong belief in the importance of education. Economic opportunities were poor in the West Indies. It was the norm to keep children in school so that, when they graduated, they would be in the best possible position in the job market.³⁷ Furthermore, a highly valued education was the best, if not the only, way to "[atone] for the blackness of one's skin" in an environment plagued by colorism.³⁸ Historical data confirm this observation. In the 1940 and 1950 censuses, enumerators were instructed to record the approximate equivalent grade in the American school system if respondents had completed their formal education in a foreign country.³⁹ In the mid-Atlantic region (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania), Black West Indians had a higher level of education than many European immigrants.⁴⁰ For instance, in the 1940 census, Black West Indians stood out with the highest percentage of individuals who had completed five or more years of college compared to British Isle immigrants from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.⁴¹ In 1950, Afro-Caribbeans had completed four years of college at a higher rate than the Scottish, Irish, Polish, and Greeks.⁴²

The Black West Indians who migrated to Philadelphia, aware that their college degrees might not be fully recognized, leveraged education opportunities in the United States. In the early 1900s, West Indian immigrants and their children matriculated to American schools in large numbers. Their children not only absorbed American culture in their educational institutions but also built influential networks by "making contacts that [would] serve to impress them with the grandeur and benevolence of America and Americans."⁴³ West Indians developed a reputation for high standards and overly strict discipline of their children, which gave their offspring little choice but to succeed.⁴⁴ Universities such as Howard, Meharry Medical College, Columbia University, Lincoln, Hampton, Tuskegee, Wilberforce, and Northwest University in

Chicago were “outstanding alma maters for hundreds of West Indian professionals . . . enjoying lucrative practices throughout the country.”⁴⁵ West Indians understood the social benefits of higher education.

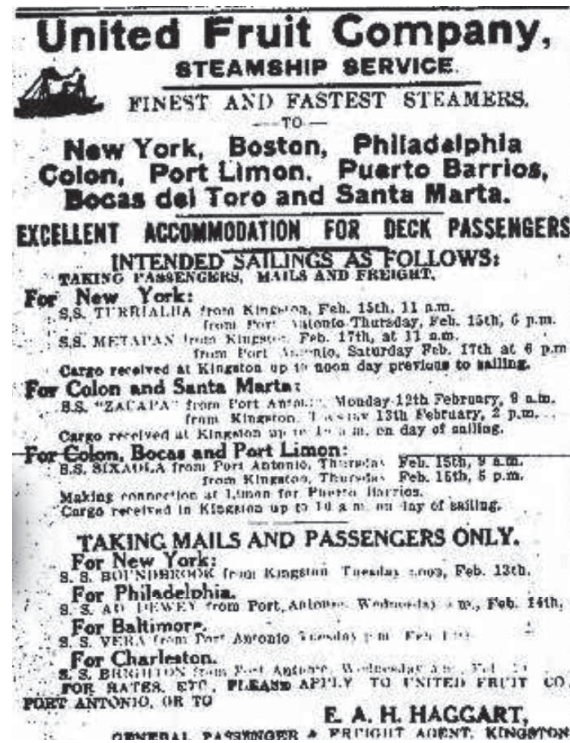
Their occupations before and upon arrival demonstrate that Afro-Caribbeans, while strong proponents of educational empowerment, did not typically occupy the highest-paying jobs. In the early twentieth century, the West Indies had a large growing number of clerks and various artisans such as mechanics, painters, carpenters, and cobblers, but they were outnumbered by the “great army of unskilled [laborers]” as roughly “half of the occupied population [was] engaged in agriculture and just under two-fifths in commerce, transport, and industry.”⁴⁶ Despite a decrease in agricultural workers in Jamaica, there was an increase in the number of rural workers who entered into the roles of domestic service, petty trading, and often prolonged unemployment.⁴⁷ It was primarily this section of the population—where male agricultural laborers earned from “1 shilling per day in the Windward and Leeward Islands to 18 shilling[s] per week in Jamaica,” and wages for clerks, shop assistants, druggists, artisans, and other classes of workers were “inadequate and [could not] be justified”—who migrated to the United States.⁴⁸ Following the decline of the sugar industry, the poverty-stricken islands began to disgorge upon the mainland of the United States “their working population, laborers, mechanics, and peasants.”⁴⁹ This migration reflects a broader economic desperation rather than a mere pursuit of better opportunities by the highly educated.

While emigrants were not composed of merely the wealthiest or most academically accomplished, contemporary observers saw this phenomenon as a plus for the individual leaving but a negative for the island population as a whole. Those leaving Antigua and St. Kitts and Nevis were described as “bright, enterprising young men,” indicating that a type of brain drain was taking place.⁵⁰ While education is a vital aspect of human capital, it is not the case that human capital is solely acquired within formal educational institutions. This became evident among Afro-Caribbeans once they arrived in Philadelphia.

Although West Indian immigrants came to the United States as an overwhelmingly literate group, their educational backgrounds did not catapult them into high-paying jobs as soon as they landed on the mid-Atlantic shores. These newcomers incurred short-term deficits, and only with time and hard work did they learn the ropes and reap the benefits of their abilities. They usually started off in the same working- and lower-middle-class jobs they had had in the West Indies. In fact, many West Indians came to the Atlantic seaboard without the security of a job offer. Most of the time, Afro-Caribbeans came to the United States poor, leaving the West Indies with “five or six dollars in [their] pocket[s] and not the slightest notion of what [they were] going to do, or where [they were] going to look for a job.”⁵¹ Afro-Caribbeans often traveled to Philadelphia, as shown in figure 1, on ships primarily designed for cargo. Passengers shared space with cargoes of bananas and other goods destined for the American market, making the journey both challenging and hopeful.

Circumstantial evidence, however, suggests that many West Indians sold their land to raise enough money to migrate to the northeastern part of the United States.⁵² According to the calculation of Lord Sydney Oliver, academic and governor of Jamaica from 1907 to 1913, more

FIGURE 1 This advertisement from the January 22, 1912, edition of the Jamaican newspaper the *Daily Gleaner* highlights the United Fruit Company's steamship service. These steamships provided a vital link for people traveling from Jamaica to the United States, allowing passengers to travel on ships primarily designed for transporting fruit and other goods.



United Fruit Company,
STEAMSHIP SERVICE.
 FINEST AND FASTEST STEAMERS.
 — TO —
New York, Boston, Philadelphia
Colon, Port Limon, Puerto Barrios,
Bocas del Toro and Santa Marta.
EXCELLENT ACCOMMODATION FOR DECK PASSENGERS
INTENDED SAILINGS AS FOLLOWS:
 TAKING PASSENGERS, MAILS AND FREIGHT.

For New York:
 S.S. TERRALHA from Kingston, Feb. 15th, 11 a.m.
 from Port Antonio Thursday, Feb. 15th, 6 p.m.
 S.S. METAPAN from Kingston, Feb. 17th, at 11 a.m.
 from Port Antonio, Saturday Feb. 17th at 6 p.m.
 Cargo received at Kingston up to noon day previous to sailing.

For Colon and Santa Marta:
 S.S. "ZACAPA" from Port Antonio, Monday 12th February, 9 a.m.
 from Kingston, Tuesday 13th February, 2 p.m.
 Cargo received at Kingston up to 10 a.m. on day of sailing.

For Colon, Bocas and Port Limon:
 S.S. SIXAOLA from Port Antonio, Thursday, Feb. 15th, 9 a.m.
 from Kingston, Thursday, Feb. 15th, 6 p.m.
 Making connection at Limon for Puerto Barrios.
 Cargo received in Kingston up to 10 a.m. on day of sailing.

TAKING MAILS AND PASSENGERS ONLY.

For New York:
 S. S. BUNDEBROOK from Kingston, Tuesday noon, Feb. 13th.

For Philadelphia:
 S. S. AD DEWEY from Port Antonio, Wednesday a.m., Feb. 14th.

For Baltimore:
 S. S. VERA from Port Antonio, Tuesday p.m., Feb. 13th.

For Charleston:
 S. S. BRINGTON from Port Antonio, Wednesday a.m., Feb. 14th.

**FOR RATES, ETC., PLEASE APPLY TO UNITED FRUIT CO.,
 PORT ANTONIO, OR TO**
E. A. H. HACCART,
 GENERAL PASSENGER & FREIGHT AGENT, KINGSTON

Source: *Daily Gleaner*, January 22, 1912, 15, Newspaper Archive.

than 20 percent of Jamaicans (1,022,150 inhabitants) owned some land, which included at least a house.⁵³ According to his account, though, it may have been an overestimation. Families from the island of Nevis, according to anthropologist Richard Fructh, and Barbados, according to colonial authorities, generated enough income through land sales to make it to the Northeast.⁵⁴ Yet we lack precise detail about the size of the landholdings, their quality, or the relative economic standing of these individuals compared to their fellow islanders or Americans.

Although a portion of Jamaica's peasantry did acquire land during the late nineteenth century, for example, these plots were generally small, less fertile, and more difficult to access compared to the larger, more productive tracts owned by merchants and planters.⁵⁵ Furthermore, they would most likely be categorized as planters now that they owned the land they worked on and would likely have identified themselves as such in official records or during migration if they immigrated, despite the quality of their land being poor. It is plausible that some of these small-scale planters, frustrated by the poor quality of their land and the challenging economic conditions, chose to sell it at higher prices due to competitive bidding and then used the proceeds to migrate to the United States for better opportunities. By the mid-1890s, landholding in Jamaica had become concentrated, with eighty-one individuals owning 97 percent of rural land, and it only got worse over time, especially due to the boom in banana cultivation.⁵⁶

Wealthy landholders had little need to migrate, while peasants and small landholders, squeezed out by corporate capital and a resurgent plantocracy, were more likely to leave. With land prices driven up by fierce competition, these individuals may have been able to sell their holdings at relatively higher prices before migrating. However, given the poor land quality and limited economic success in Jamaica, the upward socioeconomic mobility of migrants who moved to the United States was not guaranteed. Many Jamaican migrants were not wealthy landowners with substantial resources. Rather, they sold low-quality land and relied on additional earnings, often scraping together just enough to reach the United States as a way out. This background underscores that they needed to work hard in America to achieve stability, as they arrived without the economic advantage that might have eased their path. While this scenario is possible, it remains circumstantial, as we lack concrete data on the exact wealth or status of these emigrants upon arrival in the United States.

While selling one's land would certainly have helped West Indians to get to the United States, many other factors led to their success. Afro-Caribbean immigrants, whether well-educated or not, often adapted to their new environment by taking on various jobs, such as peddlers, hucksters, and salesmen who went door-to-door to sell goods.⁵⁷ Work was, if not at the top, high on the agenda for Afro-Caribbeans despite the label attached to menial jobs. Afro-Caribbeans realized that in order to make ends meet, they could not be picky. One Afro-Caribbean stated he had "worked in a brickyard, washed dishes, carried hod, was the first Negro huckster in Camden, N.J., worked as a pick-and-shovel man and a dockhand at Norfolk, Va., a salesman in Pennsylvania, a fraternal organizer, porter and messenger."⁵⁸ Such jobs were initially the norm for the West Indian immigrant. These roles illustrate not only their willingness to work in unfamiliar fields but also the economic realities of the time. The absence of minimum wage laws until the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and its substantial influence after 1950 provided Afro-Caribbeans a unique window of opportunity for diverse employment, as employers were not restricted by wage regulations.⁵⁹

Some historians contend that Black West Indians, in addition to their willingness to seek out a panoply of jobs, benefited from their accents, which often set them apart in the labor market.⁶⁰ Upon first appearance, neither Whites nor anyone else for that matter could distinguish between Blacks from the West Indies and Black Americans. However, when Whites heard an accent from the islands, especially with a British twang, they may have been treated more favorably. Conversely, an accent could work against Black foreigners as nativist sentiments often fostered discrimination against those perceived as outsiders, regardless of race.⁶¹

Nevertheless, labor flexibility and opportunity, despite its prejudicial challenges, played a critical role in the economic integration of Afro-Caribbean immigrants. Hubert Harrison describes their humble beginnings: "At first, they furnished the elevator operations, janitors, hall-boys and porters, maids and washerwomen."⁶² According to the US Census, between 1900 and 1950, the most common occupations for West Indians living in Philadelphia were laborers, longshoremen/stevedores, cooks, servants, lead and zinc mine operatives, roofers and slaters, iron molders, founders and casters, waiters/waitresses and porters.⁶³ Some took these jobs while simultaneously obtaining an education in Philadelphia, before achieving any type of success.

FIGURE 2 Barbadian-born contracting engineer Frederick McDonald Massiah (1886-1975), who immigrated to Philadelphia in 1909. He worked during the day and went to school at night and would become one of the first successful Black contract engineers in American history. This photo of Massiah dates from circa 1920.



Source: “Frederick Massiah Portraits” in Frederick and Edith L. Massiah Papers (UPT 50 M417), Folder 22, Box 5, University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center, accessed July 26, 2023, <https://archives.upenn.edu/collections/finding-aid/upt50m417/>.

Frederick McDonald Massiah, shown in figure 2, was born in Barbados and offers an example of someone who advanced himself in this manner. Massiah immigrated to Philadelphia in 1909, worked as a laborer during the day, and studied architecture at night. His petition for citizenship, shown in figure 3, identifies him as a concrete contractor, a role that required technical skill and reflects his success in civil engineering. The young Barbadian attended the Pennsylvania School of Fine Arts and went on to earn a degree in civil engineering from Drexel Institute (now Drexel University). At a time when it was almost unheard of for minorities to obtain financing, insurance, and acceptance into trade unions, he established a business and became one of the first successful Black contracting engineers in the United States. As a result of his outstanding work, he went on to win the William E. Harmon Foundation Medal. His successful forty-five-year career included various private and government contracts.⁶⁴ Massiah is an example of those Black West Indians who, once settled into their new environment, started off as “tradesmen and skilled workers [but then] thrust themselves forward into better positions and [broke] the trail for the Negro-Americans to follow.”⁶⁵

A notable number of West Indians plied their trade as longshoremen and stevedores at America’s second busiest port in the 1900s. Dock work, a grueling and dangerous job, required a man fit and desperate enough to take on the brutal manual labor necessary to

FIGURE 3 A petition for citizenship filed by Frederick McDonald Massiah, as a concrete contractor, on December 30, 1926, in Philadelphia. “B.W.I.” stands for “British West Indies.”

ORIGINAL FILED
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
 PETITION FOR CITIZENSHIP No. 106666
 To the Honorable the District Court of The United States of Phila. Penna.
 The petition of ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ **FREDERICK MC DONALD MASSIAH**, hereby filed, respectfully shows:
 (1) My place of residence is **1742 Cypress St., Phila. Penna.** (2) My occupation is **Concrete Contractor**.
 (3) I was born **Barbados, B. W. I.** **December 12, 1888**. My race is **African (Black)**.
 (4) I declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States on **December 30, 1926** in the **District**
 Court of **The United States** at **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**.
 (5) I am **not** married. The name of my wife or husband is _____ at _____ he was
 born at _____ entered the United States
 at _____ for permanent residence therein, and now
 resides at _____ I have _____ children, and the name, date,
 and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children are as follows: _____
 (6) My last foreign residence was **Barbados, B. W. I.** I emigrated to the United States of
 America from **Bridgetown, Barbados, B. W. I.** My lawful entry for permanent residence in the United States
 was at **New York, NY** under the name of **Fredrick Massiah**
 on **April 5, 1910** on the vessel **Theopis**
 as shown by the certificate of arrival attached herein.
 (7) I am not a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government or a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposed
 to organized government. I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy. I am attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States
 and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States. It is my intention to become a citizen of the United States and to renounce absolutely and
 forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to _____
 (8) I am able to speak the English language.
 (9) I have resided continuously in the United States of America for the _____ months immediately preceding the date of this petition, to wit, since
April 5, 1910
 Records Administration, _____, continuously next preceding the date of this petition, since **April 5, 1910** being a residence within said county of at least _____

Source: Ancestry.com, “Pennsylvania, US, Federal Naturalization Records, 1795-1945” [database] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2011). Original from Naturalization Records, National Archives at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

load and unload heavy items around the dock and on and off ships. That Afro-Caribbeans flocked to the docks in droves demonstrates their status upon arriving in Philadelphia. Initially, an education offered no advantage in this unskilled, irregular, and low-paying line of work.

Unlike other parts of the country, Philadelphia’s docks were integrated, partly due to the influence of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In November 1918, the Office of Naval Intelligence reported that membership of Local 8, a Philadelphia branch of the IWW, was “increasing daily, owing to the influx of a large number of West Indian negroes.”⁶⁶ The IWW’s appeal to Afro-Caribbeans stemmed from their past experiences with exploitative labor conditions in the Caribbean, which led to widespread unrest and strikes. The British Sugar Commission of 1930, for example, examined the “unsatisfactory hygienic conditions of many factories” in Jamaica on behalf of the consumer and the equally unsatisfactory conditions “from the point of view of the health and safety of the workers employed in them.”⁶⁷ It was said that “the West Indies hardly [knew] the meaning of the term ‘industrial legislation’” and that “workmen’s compensation, health insurance, restriction of child labour, factory inspection, old age pensions, etc., are matters which in most places [found] no place [in] the statute book.”⁶⁸ The IWW would have been a godsend to Afro-Caribbeans, even with its entrenched racism, as they compared the abysmal working environment they knew back home to what was presented to them in Philadelphia.

West Indian women, generally better educated than their African American peers, arrived in the United States with aspirations for better economic opportunities. However, these expectations were shattered by the reality of the job market. Despite their educational backgrounds and aversion to domestic work, most West Indian women who immigrated to Philadelphia took on servant roles and domestic responsibilities, including being cooks, chambermaids, housekeepers, and caregivers.⁶⁹ West Indian women disdained domestic roles as even

working-class families in the Caribbean employed uneducated servants. This reality clashed with their aspirations in opportunity-rich America.

When other employment options were scarce, many Afro-Caribbean women became entrepreneurs in food vending, one of the long-standing trades of Black Americans in Philadelphia. On the streets of Philadelphia from colonial times to the 1940s, one would hear, “Pepper pot! All hot! Makee back strong! Makee live long! Come buy my pepper pot!” from the Pepper Pot women of the Caribbean.⁷⁰ These occupations offered an accessible entry point into the American job market and essential incomes for new immigrant people. Despite having “little of the splendid opportunities [African American women] have had, say in the North,” reported the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Afro-Caribbean women maximized whatever chances presented themselves.⁷¹ While Afro-Caribbean women lacked the broader economic opportunities that African American women had gradually built in the North, the visibility of African American women in these roles may have provided a pathway for newly arrived Afro-Caribbean women navigating both racial and immigrant challenges. However, these were “makeshift” positions in the mind of the Afro-Caribbean woman who “felt that as a woman certain positions ought to be open to her.”⁷² Viewing these makeshift positions as temporary, these determined women leveraged their meager economic benefits to seek employment better aligned with their education and ambitions.

Cultural and social norms can hinder the progression of newcomers in a foreign country. And so, averse to domestic work, many Afro-Caribbean women left Philadelphia altogether if they could find no alternative. Despite the slow start, for those who stayed, their socioeconomic rise was impressive as they adjusted to Philadelphia’s fast-paced environment and made progress in the business and professional world.⁷³ Afro-Caribbeans had a unique amalgamation of preliteracy, willingness to engage in low-level employment, and a strong commitment to furthering their education at universities in the United States. This synergy resulted in the accumulation of a great amount of human capital.

In the analysis of income data from the 1950 census for the mid-Atlantic region, the mean income for Black West Indian workers was \$1,125.35, for African American workers \$951.44, for White Irish workers \$1,128.40, and for Chinese-born workers \$1,008.59.⁷⁴ The dataset included 144 cases for West Indian workers, 4,004 cases for African American workers, 808 cases for White Irish workers, and 64 cases for Chinese-born workers.

Both West Indian and African American groups show similar income variability, with standard deviations around 1,140, suggesting that variability is not driving the income difference between them.⁷⁵ The slightly higher mean for West Indians, with fewer cases, may have been what enhanced their reputation for financial progressiveness, as each individual income has a proportionally larger impact. For White Irish and Chinese-born groups, the higher variability (with standard deviations of 1,508.56 and 1,391.37, respectively) indicates a broader spread of incomes, particularly impactful in smaller samples such as the Chinese-born group.⁷⁶

Despite facing pervasive racial discrimination, both Black West Indian and African American communities managed to hold their ground economically in the mid-Atlantic region by

1950. The fact that Black West Indians earned nearly as much as the Irish, and more than Chinese-born immigrants, shows that they were not merely surviving. Rather, they were pushing boundaries and navigating a society structured to disadvantage them through segregation, limited job opportunities, and pervasive discrimination. Black West Indians leveraged every advantage they could find, whether through community support, higher education rates, or strategic migration, to make themselves economically visible and credible in a society that essentially saw them as outsiders.

The reputation West Indians earned as progressive, entrepreneurial, and educated was not a fluke. It was widely reinforced by Black-owned newspapers that highlighted their distinctive qualities. Due to their smaller population size, each successful West Indian figure—whether a business owner, teacher, or public figure—was highly visible, amplifying their impact in Black communities and reinforcing a narrative of success that resonated and endured.

Through their various occupations, West Indians garnered a reputation for being dependable, hardworking, and predisposed to success. Despite immersing themselves in the midst of the fierce competition of Philadelphia’s industrial boom with limited finances and no concrete plan, they became a real force in the city. As an author in the *York Daily* attested: “I have closely followed the careers of hundreds of West Indians who have come over here, and I have known very few of them to fail and go back home.”⁷⁷

West Indians followed a clear trajectory. They would take any available jobs (typically in the working class) despite what their education signaled (those not highly educated and who left working-class jobs in the West Indies did not wrestle with this psychological dilemma). This is evident in figure 4, which offers a glimpse into the economic struggles of West Indians seeking low-paying jobs in early twentieth-century America, as seen through the opportunities advertised at the time. In the United States, they were prepared to experience downward mobility to start anew. They then saved diligently and invested in the future of their children rather than their own immediate benefits.

FIGURE 4 This 1917 wanted ad from the Philadelphia *Evening Public Ledger* demonstrates that West Indians, such as the “three Jamaicans” mentioned, often sought low-paying, working-class jobs, illuminating their economic challenges in early twentieth-century America. The ad directed potential employers to contact them at 1317 S. 47th St. in West Philadelphia, which saw an increasing number of African American residents, particularly during the Great Migration.



Source: *Evening Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, October 20, 1917, in *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, image 19, accessed July 10, 2023, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045211/1917-10-20/ed-1/seq-19/>.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

West Indians, educated under the Church of England in the Caribbean, became key leaders in Philadelphia's religious communities, notably the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and Baptist denominations. Many of the West Indies' oldest colleges were originally established with a theological or religious emphasis. A religious education offered a platform for leadership, service, and social mobility and was often the highest form of education attainable for Afro-Caribbean individuals in the late 1800s and early 1900s living in their respective islands. The opportunity for socioeconomic growth presented by the church in the Caribbean translated into significant roles for West Indians in Philadelphia's religious community. In Philadelphia, "some of the ablest churchmen and missionaries in the A.M.E. Church and Baptist denomination" were West Indian.⁷⁸

Churches were central to Philadelphia's Black community in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, serving as hubs of social, educational, and leadership development. Church was more than a place of worship, as W. E. B. Du Bois put it: "The Negro churches were the birthplaces of Negro schools and of all agencies which seek to promote the intelligence of the masses; and even to-day no agency serves to disseminate news so quickly and effectively among Negroes as the church."⁷⁹ This was especially true for Afro-Caribbeans in Philadelphia. In fact, St. Simon Episcopal Church served as a way station for newly arrived Afro-Caribbean immigrants to Philadelphia, assisting them in integrating into the city's social fabric.⁸⁰ Afro-Caribbeans ranged from Baptists to Episcopalians, and from Methodists to Catholics and Presbyterians. The leaders of these powerful, influential institutions were much more than their position revealed on paper. In reality, the Black preacher was more an executive officer than a spiritual guide.⁸¹

Afro-Caribbeans were especially prominent in the Episcopal Church from Boston down to Palatka, Florida, particularly between 1880 and 1920. West Indians held "regal sway" as Episcopalian ministers.⁸² In Philadelphia, Episcopal churches were led by figures like George Alexander McGuire, shown in figure 5, who, starting in 1901, became the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church and advocated for the advancement of Blacks in the city. After his education at Mico College in Antigua and medical studies in the United States, McGuire's leadership in Philadelphia was marked by his efforts to elevate the Black community's socioeconomic status. Similarly, the Jamaican-born Henry L. Phillips, as rector of the Church of the Crucifixion, launched the nation's first penny savings bank and Philadelphia's first gym for Black Americans. He expanded the Home for the Homeless (the only shelter in Philadelphia open to needy women and children of all races) and became the first president of the Association for the Protection of Colored Women—an organization that sought to protect Black women who had recently migrated from the South from being trafficked into prostitution.⁸³ Phillips also opened a private school in Philadelphia's predominantly Black 7th Ward. Reverend Richard Bright, another notable figure (figure 6), became the first Black Episcopal archdeacon in the Savannah Episcopal diocese in Georgia, as shown in a genealogical survey in figure 7. He then established the first private kindergarten and primary school for Blacks in Georgia. He then moved to Philadelphia, became the rector of St. Monica's Episcopal Church, and stressed the importance of education, furthering the community's development. These

FIGURE 5 Two photographs of Reverend George Alexander McGuire in the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, Philadelphia, the oldest Black Episcopal congregation in the United States.



Source: Photographed in situ by the author with permission.

religious leaders, among others, played pivotal roles in enhancing the social and economic conditions of West Indians and other Black Americans in Philadelphia.

CULTURE AND FAMILY

A strong nuclear family was another integral component of Afro-Caribbean socioeconomic success in Philadelphia. It was said that “next to the church, the home is the West Indian’s most precious sanctuary.”⁸⁴ Though they were at odds with one another at times, Afro-Caribbeans and native Black Americans nevertheless formed stable family units through intermarriage. Black American women “adore[d] West Indians and [married] them because they [were] brave and ambitious and make excellent family men,” while West Indian men adored Black American women “because of their charm and culture, and their excellence in home economics.”⁸⁵

As a host of economic data bear out, groups that use the institution of marriage to maintain strong two-parent family structures achieve far more prosperous economic outcomes than groups that do not. In Philadelphia, in the US Census years 1900, 1920, and 1940, the marital status of Black British West Indians reflected their belief in the institution of marriage. According to each of those censuses, Black British West Indians consistently exhibited high marriage rates and intact family structures, surpassing both native-born Blacks and White

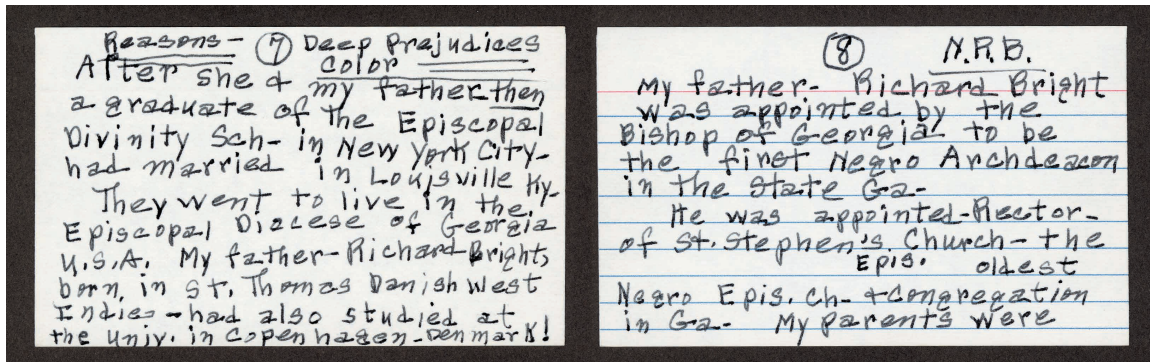
FIGURE 6 Born in 1866 in St. Thomas, Danish West Indies, Reverend Richard Bright became the first Black archdeacon in the state of Georgia, having been educated at Raleigh’s St. Augustine Collegiate Institute in South Carolina and the Episcopal Theological Seminary in New York.



Source: Nellie Rathbone Bright Family Papers (Collection 2057), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Photographed in situ by the author with permission.

Americans in Philadelphia. While the Irish had slightly higher rates in 1900, West Indians led in marriage rates, including over the Irish, by 1920 and 1940 (see table 1 for detailed data).⁸⁶ Of interest here as well, according to census data, native-born Black Americans in Philadelphia had a higher rate of intact families than native-born White Americans in 1900, 1920, and 1940. In Philadelphia, and throughout the nation, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries “the majority of blacks not only believed in but practiced matrimony.”⁸⁷ As W. E. B. Du Bois observed in his pioneering sociological study *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), a weak family structure and lack of respect for the marriage bond had such negative effects as unattended children being allowed on the street day and night, bad household economy, inadequate family governance, and inappropriate language and behavior among children.⁸⁸ Nellie Bright, shown in Figure 8, the daughter of the previously mentioned Reverend Richard Bright, is an example of the product of the strict, two-parent Afro-Caribbean households that created advantageous environments for raising children.

FIGURE 7 These index cards detail a short genealogical survey of the Bright family. Nellie Bright documents her father's life, including his studies in Copenhagen, Denmark. Richard Bright must have studied at the University of Copenhagen, since it was the only university in Denmark in the early 1900s, founded in 1479.



Source: Nellie Rathbone Bright Family Papers (Collection 2057), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Photographed in situ by the author with permission.

Due to their race and foreign origins, Afro-Caribbeans faced prejudice, but collective empowerment was yet another factor that allowed them to outmaneuver discriminatory obstacles. Afro-Caribbeans were known for exceptional cooperation within their community, fostering a high degree of trust among members. They strongly supported one another socially, economically, and educationally and assisted newcomers with the cultural adjustment to Philadelphia. Collective economics were at the forefront of community building. Starting in the early 1900s, West Indian communities in the United States had formed rotating savings and credit associations, also known as “susus,” which were informal banking mechanisms that allowed members to pool money and take turns accessing larger sums. The success of these depended on social trust within the community and “were only able to function because the tight-knit community ensured that participants did not default.”⁸⁹ The Chinese and the Japanese did the same with their “hui” and “tanamoshi,” respectively, which also relied on trust and were socially and economically effective.⁹⁰ African Americans “enjoyed a proud reputation, at least in Philadelphia, of avoiding charity of all kinds and were especially noted for the number and range of their mutual-benefit and self-help organizations” to foster resilience and independence.⁹¹ In Philadelphia, Black communities supported one another financially and offered benefits like sick pay and funeral coverage. By fostering financial self-reliance, social trust, and mutual support, West Indian communities, along with others, built a solid foundation for economic growth, enabled entrepreneurial ventures, and created a lasting financial safety net for one another.

Afro-Caribbean immigrants had a sense of both entrepreneurship and kinship, which saw them open businesses and hire fellow Afro-Caribbeans. Historian and “Father of Black History” Carter G. Woodson explained what had become well known: “Wherever you find a native of the West Indies, you will probably be able to interest him in doing something for another native of one of these Islands. . . . Wherever you find a native of the West Indies starting some sort of enterprise, you are more than apt to see his average fellow country-men coming to his support, giving him every chance to do the thing as it should be.”⁹² Research suggests that such an attitude is vital to a group’s socioeconomic success.

TABLE 1 US CENSUS DATA ON MARITAL STATUS BY RACE FOR 1900, 1920, AND 1940

Year	Marriage status	Black British West Indians		Irish		Native-born Black Americans		Native-born White Americans	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1900	Married, spouse present	2.00498753	50.12	490.080043	51.81	183.961197	30.51	2,548.87	27.64
	Married, spouse absent	0.997506234	24.94	35.9653344	3.8	44.0421286	7.3	188.966312	2.05
	Never married/single	0.997506234	24.94	274.926357	29.06	309.003326	51.24	6,038.12	65.47
	Widowed			145.028266	15.33	65.9933481	10.94	437.0388201	4.74
	Divorced							10.0122527	0.11
1920	Married, spouse present	4	57.14	334	54.4	584	41.86	3,891	30.91
	Married spouse absent			22	3.58	94	6.74	290	2.3
	Never married/single	3	42.86	131	21.34	603	43.23	7,712	61.27
	Widowed			125	20.36	110	7.89	662	5.26
	Divorced			2	0.33	4	0.29	32	0.25
1940	Married, spouse present	3	72 (Ancestry.com) 100 (IPUMS USA)	207.277969	53.28	864.199076	34.38	5,076.93	35.6
	Married, spouse absent			19.4147469	4.99	287.410147	11.43	444.510554	3.12
	Never married/single			79.90711	20.54	1,124.04	44.71	7,830.28	54.91
	Widowed			82.4002732	21.18	225.916759	8.99	790.153801	5.54
	Divorced					12.4362704	0.49	119.123955	0.84

Source: Compiled by author from Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Annie Chen, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rogers, and Megan Schouweiler, "IPUMS USA: Version 15.0" [dataset] [Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024], <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V15.0>, and Ancestry.com, "1940 United States Federal Census" [database] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2006).

FIGURE 8 Born on March 28, 1898, Nellie Bright, the daughter of Richard Bright, exemplified the educational values instilled by her Caribbean parents, participating in the Black intellectual renaissance, cofounding the literary magazine *Black Opal* in the late 1920s, becoming principal of several Philadelphia public schools, teaching in-service courses on Black history, serving on over fifteen civic boards, and receiving numerous awards, including one from the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery in 1972.



Source: Nellie Rathbone Bright Family Papers (Collection 2057), Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Photographed in situ by the author with permission.

Samuel Alfred Haynes, a Black Belizean activist and poet, observed in 1930 that “the success of West Indians in business and the professions in centers like New York, Brooklyn, New Orleans, Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Va., and Mobile, Ala. had incited the same jealousy and misapprehension that the Jews, Chinese, and Italians occasion in Negro communities.”⁹³ Jamaicans were dubbed “Jewmaicans” by Afro-Americans, and a running joke was that as soon as a West Indian got “ten cents above a beggar,” he opened up a business.⁹⁴ Their entrepreneurial spirit is verified by the fact that Afro-Caribbeans had a significantly higher percentage of self-employment (15.29 percent) compared to both native-born Black Americans (2.74 percent) and the Irish (1.80 percent) in Philadelphia by 1940.⁹⁵

The socioeconomic success of West Indians, fueled by their active pursuit of business ownership and economic independence, together with cultural mores inherited from the British such as formality, decorum, an emphasis on academic achievement, and a healthy respect for authority, may have contributed to perceptions of arrogance and superiority.⁹⁶ Although they faced intraracial and virulent interracial hostility in Philadelphia, Afro-Caribbeans forged strong bonds to ensure one another's success, much like the Chinese and Jews.⁹⁷ In Philadelphia "and other cities along the Atlantic seaboard," West Indians "[clung] together, and [made] a point of hunting up new arrivals from the West Indies and helping them find their footing among a strange people in a strange land."⁹⁸ This was crucial to their success because "in most instances the immigrant Negro comes from a primarily agrarian community into the secondary urban organization of modern industry."⁹⁹ Arriving at the second-busiest port in the United States, many of these immigrants from small islands were understandably overwhelmed. However, to counteract this feeling, communities or groups with strong, cohesive bonds benefited their members by embedding them in networks of information and influence. These social organizations became pivotal in the lives of Afro-Caribbeans in Philadelphia by providing resources that built connections, promoted advocacy, and supported their integration.

The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), founded by Marcus Garvey in 1914 and shown in figure 9, quickly established a significant presence in the United States, particularly in Philadelphia, where Division 47 became the nation's second-largest chapter by 1919. The UNIA in Philadelphia, which Garvey lauded as a stronghold, transcended its West Indian roots, attracting Black newcomers from the South with its message of racial pride and economic self-sufficiency. In 1920, the Black Cross Nurses, an auxiliary of the UNIA, was established in the city, offering healthcare training and services amidst high racial barriers, symbolizing the organization's broader impact on the African American community. Furthermore, Afro-Caribbeans in Philadelphia actively participated in various fraternal orders, including the Masons, Odd Fellows, Mechanics, and Elks. Additionally, social clubs, notably the Caribbean Cricket Club, created a cohesive community network that facilitated the cultural integration and upward social mobility of the West Indian community.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY

Faced with such obstacles, we must try to explain the impact West Indians had within both Black communities and the wider society, where they were admired for their cultural influence, educational achievements, and entrepreneurial mindset.¹⁰⁰ Their success can be attributed to selectivity along with specific norms and values that emphasize education, community support, and self-sacrifice. The term *selectivity* refers to "the distinction between movers and nonmovers, on measurable job-related characteristics like education or on hard-to-measure characteristics like ingenuity."¹⁰¹ Selectivity can be positive (e.g., the selected individuals are better educated and more ambitious than the average citizen in their country) or negative (e.g., the selected individuals are less educated and less ambitious).¹⁰² Selectivity theory posits that the subset of West Indians who chose to migrate will naturally tend to have higher levels of the characteristics necessary to make that migration successful. The same would

FIGURE 9 The UNIA building on Cecil B. Moore Avenue in Philadelphia, built in the early twentieth century, served as a gathering place for many Black West Indians and Americans to promote business ownership, economic independence, and racial unity. The UNIA was founded by Jamaican Marcus Garvey in 1914.



Source: Photograph by author.

have been true of Black Southerners who migrated to Pennsylvania in the early twentieth century. If the destination of the migrant has plus factors, such as higher-paying job opportunities, then movers will tend to be positively selected for the traits necessary to take advantage of such factors, as well as for the very desire to migrate to a place where such conditions are plentiful in the first place.

Given the West Indies' destitution, which led men to prefer the hazardous and disease-ridden work in Panama, and considering Philadelphia's superior safety, education, job prospects, and stability, selectivity theory dictates that positive selection would, therefore, be high. In the words of one Barbadian living in Philadelphia in 1903, growing poverty made it impossible to get ahead in the West Indies, and so "naturally all the bright, enterprising young men come [to the United States] . . . and every West Indian is firmly convinced that there are plenty of dollars to be picked up here, while he is dubious about England."¹⁰³ As evidenced by their experience

and livelihoods, it is clear that many West Indians in Philadelphia possessed an abundance of hard-to-measure characteristics that bolstered their chances of socioeconomic success, such as ambition, intelligence, amicability, and diligence.

Factors such as migration costs and intervening obstacles exert a heavy influence on selectivity. The greater the obstacles, such as distance from destination, the monetary cost of migration, the strictness of immigration rules, or the number of dependents reliant upon the immigrant, the higher the quality of the traits that are selected. All these factors were at play, as escaping the Caribbean and successfully immigrating to the United States was no easy feat. To take one example, the Jamaican planter class was “jealous of the emigration of able-bodied laborer[s],” and so in a bid to inhibit their laborers from leaving for Panama and the United States, the colonial state introduced the Emigrant Laborers Protection Law in 1893. The law required individuals to obtain a permit before they emigrated to specific countries. In 1895 and 1904, the law became much stricter, and, in the latter year, amendments mandated that emigrants deposit funds for repatriation.¹⁰⁴ These departure fees or exit visas (the cost of which continually increased with time), along with the cost of a ticket on a steamship to Boston, New York, or Philadelphia amid a low-wage environment, invariably increased migration costs, making the barrier to entry prohibitive for many.

The US Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 severely restricted West Indian immigration due to the time and effort required to obtain a visa, with the result that only the most clever and determined individuals succeeded in migrating.¹⁰⁵ It is often mistakenly understood that the Johnson-Reed Act did not affect the British West Indies; in reality, the act “placed the ‘non-self-governing’ colonies of the Americas (e.g., the British West Indies but not Canada) under quota control for the first time.”¹⁰⁶ Literacy screened out immigrants deemed undesirable or potentially incapable of assimilating into American culture. In 1903, a St. Kitts newspaper decried “the continual exodus of our respectable people to the States and Canada.”¹⁰⁷ If immigration was confined to the “ne’er-do-wells,” explained one Barbadian man, “it might be thought a mercy that they should leave their country for their country’s good.” But in the West Indies, he continued, “the dregs remain” while the United States finds room for the most ambitious men and women.¹⁰⁸ This supports selectivity theory: those who stay behind (minus the upper class) are usually unexceptional compared to those who migrate. However, selectivity theory does not fully explain the complex interplay of individual exceptionalism and the myriad cultural factors that determine how immigrants operate within any given society.

Individual movers may have both greater “easy-to-measure” and “hard-to-measure” job-related characteristics than nonmovers, but both operate through a set of cultural maxims specific to their place of origin. Afro-Caribbeans succeeded through community support, not just individual effort. Afro-Caribbean immigrants, driven by “a profound interest in self-government,” successfully navigated the American landscape, an achievement underpinned by cultural institutions that fostered resilience against formidable challenges.¹⁰⁹ This ethos of self-governance, or agency, was evident in letters between Afro-Caribbeans in St. Kitts and Nevis and the United States, where advice often included the necessity to “stoop and conquer” amid racial discrimination—a strategy many West Indians employed to great effect.¹¹⁰

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In drawing on the past successes of groups like Black West Indians, public policy must focus on fostering self-reliance while avoiding the creation of government programs that lead to dependency. Initiatives should empower immigrant and domestic populations alike to thrive independently, ensuring that they can leverage their inherent capabilities and resilience to succeed in America.

To optimize the quality of incoming immigrants, the United States must first update its immigration system and implement policies that prioritize applicants with specific skills and educational backgrounds needed in the economy. There are several ways to make the immigration system more efficient. For example, it should limit the paperwork; shorten application forms; digitize the system; implement remote video visa interviews; and create a centralized immigration agency position. The United States could also implement measures such as a point-based system with factors such as age, work experience, and educational qualifications, prioritizing individuals who are likely to contribute significantly to the economy and society.

West Indian immigrants' education in Philadelphia aided their early adaptation and long-term success in America by improving communication, cultural integration, problem solving, networking, and upward mobility, even from low-paying beginnings. Black West Indians who arrived in Philadelphia usually had an education and did not start from scratch. They had a solid foundation that they had received in secondary school, which helped them climb the socioeconomic ladder in the United States.¹¹¹ According to many studies, including Nobel laureate James Heckman's research, early childhood investments yield the highest returns. Obtaining skills earlier fosters skill acquisition later in life "because early learning begets later learning."¹¹² Returns are highest for investments made at younger ages and remedial investments are often prohibitively costly.

To support immigrants' educational success, it is essential to implement policies that enable access to diverse schooling options, such as charter and magnet schools, alongside voucher programs and Educational Savings Accounts. Such measures can break the cycle of being trapped in receiving a low-quality education simply because of district boundaries.

Policymakers already have successful models to emulate. For example, under Ian Rowe's leadership, Vertex Partnerships Academies in the South Bronx has set a precedent for academic excellence with a values-based approach and an International Baccalaureate program to prepare students for diverse futures, whether in college or direct entry into rewarding careers. Similarly, Public Prep, a network of tuition-free, single-gender charter schools, encourages students to achieve their highest potential.¹¹³ The impact of charter schools is significant: of the two thousand public schools in the South Bronx (District 8), only 2 percent of students were college-ready upon graduation in 2019. Conversely, charter school students from third through eighth grade recorded a 62.4 percent proficiency rate in math and 57.8 percent in English Language Arts, compared to their public school peers who had proficiency rates of 30.2 percent and 32.4 percent, respectively.¹¹⁴ School choice should be implemented and provided.

While educational vouchers and tuition tax credits are sometimes touted as solutions, they must be approached with caution. These well-intentioned programs have been criticized for potentially undermining public education systems by diverting funds to private sectors without stringent oversight. Additionally, they sometimes fail to fully cover private education costs, adding financial strain on families without consistently improving educational outcomes. A balanced approach that includes careful implementation and rigorous evaluation of voucher programs could help ensure that they effectively contribute to providing quality education, thereby giving children the best chance to succeed. Lastly, establishing rigorous scouting programs and nationwide testing would identify and cultivate hidden talents among all children, ensuring that the gifted and exceptional do not slip through the cracks due to socioeconomic circumstances or minor distractions. Policies must ensure immigrant and native-born families have every opportunity to access such quality educational resources.

In terms of the occupations of West Indian movers versus nonmovers, there does not seem to be as drastic a difference. Traditionally, the overwhelming majority of West Indian non-movers toiled in working-class occupations such as manual labor. For instance, as late as the 1943 Jamaican Census, 46 percent of Black Jamaicans were working in agriculture, 19 percent in professional service/public administration/personal service, 9 percent in construction/transportation/communications, and 6 percent in retail trade.¹¹⁵ Similarly, West Indians who lived in Philadelphia initially had working-class jobs and participated in manual labor.

To enhance economic mobility, several policies could be implemented. First, government-sponsored vocational training and skill development programs should be tailored for these occupations to improve qualifications and earning potential. The United States should look to Germany and emulate its vocational programs. Although Germany has a relatively low percentage of the adult population completing a tertiary qualification (approximately 28 percent), over 40 percent of German adults have completed a vocational education and training program. While Germans with vocational apprenticeships earn about two-thirds of what those with a bachelor's degree earn and 92 percent of the average German wage, Americans with only a high-school education earn about 70 percent of the average American wage.¹¹⁶ Expanded access to adult education and job placement services could help trained individuals obtain higher-paying jobs, making early workforce entry a viable and attractive option.

The entrepreneurial success of Afro-Caribbeans, indicated by their high self-employment rates historically, highlights the potential for economic advancement within a free-market system. To fully realize this potential, policy should aim to provide access to private loans for businesses, ensure a low barrier to entry for family businesses, and create sustainable employment opportunities. This would minimize regulatory hurdles and foster a business-friendly environment. Policy measures should include deregulation, particularly in occupational licensing and work-from-home regulations. Such policies would not only support individuals in starting and growing their own businesses but also in finding employment that provides a family-sustaining income. This approach encourages a system where hard work and market-driven initiatives are sufficient to sustain a family, thereby reducing the need for extensive government intervention and promoting economic self-reliance.

Beyond pro-business initiatives, policies should be put in place in the United States to incentivize marriage and intact families. As research data have shown, including this case study in particular, the children of intact families fare better in life than their counterparts in single-parent households. The potent advantages offered by the “two-parent privilege” make it clear that fostering stable two-parent households should be a cornerstone of policy.¹¹⁷ Tangible economic benefits could be offered to married couples with children for a set period. Newlyweds could receive a small reduction in income tax for the first few years of marriage and access government loans. Subsidies or low-interest loans could be offered to married couples purchasing their first home. Additionally, this could include grants for home renovations that accommodate growing families, encouraging long-term stability. These policy ideas aim to support the socioeconomic success of both immigrant and native-born families.

But crafting these policies is not enough. They must be marketed effectively enough to reach their intended targets. Often, opportunities are promoted through the websites of agencies like the Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, and Housing and Urban Development, but these efforts fall short. To improve outreach, the government should utilize data to focus on where their target audiences are most engaged, particularly through digital platforms. Social media, television, and YouTube ads, as well as promotion at high schools, sporting events, and on public transportation, can mirror the marketing strategies of private companies. Additionally, sharing compelling facts—such as the financial benefits of marriage or higher education—can further incentivize participation.

In early twentieth-century America, trivial characteristics such as skin color and birthplace weighed far more heavily than they should have in a merit-based society. Afro-Caribbeans were judged to be deficient on both fronts, an undeniably unjust state of affairs. However, education, ambition, and hard work also propelled economic achievements. The Afro-Caribbean experience proves that values that maximize human capital can surmount adverse circumstances. This case study illustrates how nonracial factors influenced socioeconomic outcomes. Policy must recognize the pragmatic aspect of individual agency, where people make personal decisions that they believe are optimal concerning marriage, employment, education, and lifestyle. Therefore, our strategy should focus on maximizing opportunities and setting aspirational goals.

We should steer clear of ambiguous, open-ended, and unrealistic goals, given the inherent differences in individuals and their circumstances. It is crucial to acknowledge that even partial improvement, such as a 25 percent betterment of current conditions, represents significant progress. Should we be constrained to prioritize a single policy initiative, it would unequivocally focus on policies that incentivize marriage and intact families. Were the scope permitted to include a second priority, it would expand to encompass policies that improve vocational opportunities. These strategic choices are designed to leverage incremental but tangible advancements in economic mobility.

West Indian migrants to Philadelphia exemplified the power of community, education, and resilience, setting a profound example of socioeconomic success despite formidable barriers. Their experiences underscore the need for policies that support education access, economic

opportunity, and community networks. By reinforcing these pillars, we can foster environments where immigrants and all community members can thrive. Policies that prioritize education, support entrepreneurial initiatives, and strengthen family structures in a nondependent manner create a framework for social mobility. Reflecting on the historical success of the West Indian community in Philadelphia reveals that integrated policy approaches should attempt to harness the potential of diverse communities, ensuring collective and individual resilience and collaborative efforts lead to lasting achievements.

NOTES

1. In fact, evidence suggests that most low-income Americans end up outearning their parents, demonstrating significant economic mobility. See Michael R. Strain, "Interpreting Mobility Statistics" (PowerPoint presentation, American Enterprise Institute, 2020), <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/05062020-Strain-Interpreting-Mobility-Statistics.pdf>.
2. Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones, and Sonya R. Porter, "Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135, no. 2 (2020): 711: "Hispanic Americans are moving up significantly in the income distribution across generations." See also Kori Hale, "The Unstoppable Growth Rate of Latino-Owned Businesses in America," *Forbes*, April 3, 2024: "New businesses owned by Latinos accounted for 36% of launches in 2023, according to a new analysis of Census Bureau data. Latino-owned businesses are on a transformative journey . . . all thanks to Latino Americans' entrepreneurial spirit. As of 2023, Latino entrepreneurs have established a staggering five million businesses across the United States, collectively generating over \$800 billion in annual revenue. . . . The rapid pace of this growth is further highlighted by the fact that the number of Latino/a-owned businesses surged by 34% from 2007 to 2019."
3. When using the term "the West Indies" or "the Caribbean," I'm referring to the British West Indies (Jamaica, Anguilla, Antigua-Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, the British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos, the Leeward and Windward Islands, Belize/British Honduras, Guyana/British Guiana) and the US Virgin Islands (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas). This study attempts to exclude the Dutch-, French-, and Spanish-speaking islands. The terms "West Indian," "Black West Indian," and "Afro-Caribbean" will be used interchangeably throughout this paper, and all refer to the people from the set of islands listed.
4. The West Indies is also known as the Caribbean (the two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this paper).
5. Edward Raymond Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania: Slavery-Servitude-Freedom, 1639-1861* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 1911), 9.
6. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Negro Population of the United States, 1790-1915* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 61.
7. Dr. Hubert H. Harrison, "Du Bois a West Indian, Declares Dr. H. H. Harrison: Prejudice Growing Less and Co-Operation More, Says Student of Question," *Pittsburgh Courier*, January 29, 1927, A7, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
8. Winston James, "Explaining Afro-Caribbean Social Mobility in the United States: Beyond the Sowell Thesis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 2 (2002): 220. Adapted from US Bureau of Immigration, *Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration to the Secretary of Labor* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1899-1937).
9. International African Service Bureau, *The West Indies Today* (London, 1936), 15.
10. It also did not help that Europe had found a cheaper substitute for cane sugar in beet sugar.
11. See Eleanor Marie Lawrence Brown, "The Blacks Who 'Got Their Forty Acres': A Theory of Black West Indian Migrant Asset Acquisition," *New York University Law Review* 89, no. 1 (2014): 27-88.
12. Brown explains that Barbadians actually had "limited, less common provision grounds due to land scarcity" ("Blacks Who 'Got Their Forty Acres,'" 67). See James, "Explaining Afro-Caribbean Social

Mobility,” 237: “From the Chesapeake to Louisiana . . . where slaves secured a lesser or greater degree of control over economic activities during their ‘free time’ and engaged in widespread market transactions.”

13. Brown, “Blacks Who ‘Got Their Forty Acres,’” 59.
14. Jamaica Registrar General’s Department and Department of Statistics, *Census of Jamaica and Its Dependencies, Taken on the 25th of April, 1921* (Kingston: Government Printing Office, 1922), 9, cited in Brown, “Blacks Who ‘Got Their Forty Acres,’” 59–60.
15. Waymon R. Hinson, “Land Gains, Land Losses: The Odyssey of African Americans Since Reconstruction,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 77, nos. 3–4 (2018): 893–939.
16. Roy W. Copeland, “The Rise and Fall of Black Real Property Ownership: A Review of Black Land Ownership,” *National Black Law Journal* 9, no. 1 (1984): 53; Dania V. Francis, Grieve Chelwa, Darrick Hamilton, Thomas W. Mitchell, Nathan A. Rosenberg, and Bryce Wilson Stucki, “The Contemporary Relevance of Historic Black Land Loss,” American Bar Association, January 6, 2023, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/wealth-disparities-in-civil-rights/the-contemporary-relevance-of-historic-black-land-loss/; Rural Business-Cooperative Service, *Black Farmers in America, 1865–2000: The Pursuit of Independent Farming and the Role of Cooperatives*, RBS Research Report 194 (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 2002), <https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RR194.pdf>.
17. Justene Hill Edwards, *Unfree Markets: The Slaves’ Economy and the Rise of Capitalism in South Carolina* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 44.
18. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998), 38.
19. Gisela Eisner, *Jamaica, 1830–1930: A Study in Economic Growth* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1961), 332–33, table lxvii.
20. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 30.
21. Roger Lane, “Black Philadelphia, Then and Now,” *The Public Interest*, no. 108 (Summer 1992): 37, <https://www.nationalaffairs.com/storage/app/uploads/public/58e1a4e0c58e1a4e0c2565394034364.pdf>.
22. Lane, “Black Philadelphia,” 40.
23. Campbell Gibson, “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places: 1790–1990” (working paper POP-WP027), US Bureau of the Census, June 15, 1998, <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1998/demo/POP-twps0027.html>.
24. Vincent P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900–1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979).
25. Lane, “Black Philadelphia,” 40.
26. Lane, “Black Philadelphia,” 41.
27. An Old Timer, “No Cause for Bitterness of Expression,” *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 25, 1920, 1, NewspaperArchive.
28. An Old Timer, “No Cause for Bitterness of Expression.”
29. “The West Indians Flock Here to America Their Mecca: Rarely Fail to Achieve Success Although Coming with Almost Nothing—Winning of Sweetheart Sometimes the Intention to Victory—No Financial Inducements to Remain at Home—Fellow Countrymen Here to Help Them,” *York Daily*, August 22, 1903, 6, Newspapers.com.
30. “West Indians Flock Here.”
31. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, Erin Meyer, Jose Pacas, and Matthew Sobek, “IPUMS USA: Version 12.0” [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V12.0>. It is worth noting that some alternative sources, such as Ancestry.com, indicate different figures. See Ancestry.com, “1910 United States Federal Census” [database] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2006). Original data from US Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States*, Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group (RG) 29, T624, 1,178 microfilm rolls, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC. The raw data in that database as calculated by the author indicates a West Indian literacy rate of 94.95 percent in 1910.

32. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Danika Brockman, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, and Megan Schouweiler, "IPUMS USA: Version 13.0" [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V13.0>.
33. James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1930), 153.
34. International African Service Bureau, *West Indies Today*, 13.
35. Jamaica Department of Statistics, *West Indian Census 1946* (Kingston: Government Printer, 1948), 44, table N.
36. Edward Albert Odell, *Outlook in the West Indies* (New York: Friendship Press, 1942), 23.
37. Although education was held in high regard, the quality of the facilities in the West Indies was anything but first-rate. In 1931 and 1932, the UK Education Commission visited the West Indies and reported that "the primary education in the West Indies was the least progressive of any which he had encountered in the British Empire . . . also that school buildings are the worst he had ever seen" (International African Service Bureau, *West Indies Today*, 18).
38. J. A. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Discusses West Indian Women: Native of Jamaica Says Lack of Educational Advantages Drop Them behind American Women in Achievement; Too Keen on Color Customs and Prejudices of Old Country Live Longer with Them Than with Men; Marry Their Own Countrymen," *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 26, 1927, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 2.
39. "1940 Census: Instructions to Enumerators," IPUMS USA, https://usa.ipums.org/usa-action/source_documents/enum_instruct_1940_tag.xml#76.
40. Due to the limited sample size of the educational attainment of Black West Indians in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania in 1940 and 1950, additional data was sourced from the mid-Atlantic region. The educational attainment information for the mid-Atlantic region was extracted from the US Census data of 1940 and 1950 using IPUMS USA, a trusted source for microdata analysis. The expanded dataset allowed for a more comprehensive examination of educational trends among Black West Indians in the broader geographic context of the mid-Atlantic region.
41. Calculations based on data from Ancestry.com, "1940 United States Federal Census" [database] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2012). Original data from US Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG 29, T627, 4,643 microfilm rolls, NARA, Washington, DC; and Ruggles et al., "IPUMS USA: Version 12.0."
42. "1940 Census."
43. S. Haynes, "West Indian Journalist Analyzes Chasm between West Indians, US Negroes: Admits Many West Indians Are Unbearable in Effort to Impress; the American Negro Resents Being Termed 'Monkey-Chaser,'" *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 31, 1930, 15, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
44. Ira De Augustine Reid, *The Negro Immigrant, His Background, Characteristics, and Social Adjustment, 1899-1937* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 144-45.
45. Haynes, "West Indian Journalist," 15.
46. International African Service Bureau, *West Indies Today*, 7.
47. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 15.
48. According to the Bank of England, when adjusting for inflation, £1 in 1937 would be approximately £56 today. This means 1 shilling would have corresponded to around \$3.42 (per day in the Windward and Leeward Islands) and 18 shillings to around \$61.72 (per week in Jamaica). See "Inflation Calculator," Bank of England, accessed September 22, 2023, <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator> (the pound-to-dollar conversion was obtained from XE.com on September 22, 2023); and International African Service Bureau, *West Indies Today*, 15-16.
49. Harrison, "Du Bois a West Indian."
50. "West Indians Flock Here."
51. "West Indians Flock Here."
52. Brown, "Blacks Who 'Got Their Forty Acres,'" 44-46.

53. Lord Sydney Olivier, *Jamaica: The Blessed Island* (1936), cited in Brown, "Blacks Who 'Got Their Forty Acres,'" 47-48. See Darryl Lundy, "Sydney Haldane Olivier, 1st and last Baron Olivier" (Person Page 18294), The Peerage, last modified October 7, 2013, <http://thepeerage.com/p18294.htm#i182931>.
54. Brown, "Blacks Who 'Got Their Forty Acres,'" 45-46.
55. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 20.
56. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 20-21.
57. S. Haynes, "Negro Should Buy from Own Race: Depression Has Forced Thousands into Streets to Sell Wares, Army Needs Support," *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 17, 1932, 9, ProQuest.
58. Reid, *Negro Immigrant*, 211.
59. Thomas Sowell, *Basic Economics*, 5th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 169: "The practical impact of the Fair Labor Standards Act was initially measured. Wartime inflation during the 1940s effectively nullified the act of unintended wage floors, as market wages for even unskilled workers rose well above the legislated minimums. It wasn't until after 1950, following significant revisions and increases in the federal minimum wage, that the act began to exert a substantial influence on the labor market."
60. Sarah-Jane (Saje) Mathieu, "The African American Great Migration Reconsidered," *OAH Magazine of History* 23, no. 4 (October 2009): 21. See also Walter E. Williams, *The State against Blacks* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 24: "Our lives are largely spent discriminating for and against selected activities, objects and people. For example, many of us discriminate against those who have criminal records, who bathe infrequently, who use vulgar speech. Some employers discriminate against applicants who speak with a foreign accent, who have a low intelligence or cannot read or went to the 'wrong' college."
61. For explicit examples post-1950 of West Indian accents being viewed with varying favorability, see Suzanne Model, "Testing the White Favor: West Indian Immigrants and Race in the United States," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 6 (2008): 121-22, 129-30, 138-39.
62. Harrison, "Du Bois a West Indian."
63. Calculations based on Ancestry.com's United States Federal Census databases for 1900-1950 (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2004-22). Original data for 1900-1950 censuses from Records of the Bureau of the Census, RG 29, NARA; Ruggles et al., "IPUMS USA: Version 13.0."
64. See "Frederick and Edith L. Massiah Papers, UPT 50 M417," University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center, accessed December 13, 2024, <https://archives.upenn.edu/collections/finding-aid/upt50m417/>.
65. Harrison, "Du Bois a West Indian."
66. Office of Naval Intelligence, "Investigation of the Marine Transport Workers and the Alleged Threatened Combination between Them and the Bolsheviki and Sinn Feiners," December 23, 1918, 31-32, Folder 20/580, Box 89 (20/544-20/580), Entry 1 (General Records, 1907-1942, Chief Clerk's Files), RG 174, NARA, Washington, DC; James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 183-84.
67. International African Service Bureau, *West Indies Today*, 16-17.
68. International African Service Bureau, *West Indies Today*, 17.
69. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Discusses West Indian Women," 2.
70. Charles L. Blockson, *African Americans in Pennsylvania: A History and Guide* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1994), 49.
71. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Discusses West Indian Women," 2.
72. Rogers, "J. A. Rogers Discusses West Indian Women," 2.
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74. Steven Ruggles, Sarah Flood, Matthew Sobek, Daniel Backman, Annie Chen, Grace Cooper, Stephanie Richards, Renae Rogers, and Megan Schouweiler, "IPUMS USA: Version 15.0" [dataset] (Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V15.0>. While the total personal income (INCTOT) variable was unavailable, wage and salary income (INCWAGE) were used to provide the closest approximation for annual earnings in this analysis.
75. The standard deviation for West Indians was 1,148.17; for African Americans it was 1,138.90.

76. Ruggles et al., "IPUMS USA: Version 15.0." While the income data provides a snapshot of earnings among Black West Indian, African American, White Irish, and Chinese-born workers in the mid-Atlantic region, the comparisons between Black West Indians and other groups (African American, White Irish, and Chinese-born) are not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that, although there are observable differences in mean income, they aren't large enough to confidently conclude they weren't due to chance, except in the case of African American and White Irish earnings, where a statistically significant difference was observed.
77. "West Indians Flock Here."
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79. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 147.
80. Ayana Jones, "Henry L. Booth, 100, Master Plumber and Landlord," *Philadelphia Tribune*, October 25, 2016, https://www.phillytrib.com/obituaries/henry-l-booth-100-master-plumber-and-landlord/article_b2e98b10-8167-5cae-865e-900752efaf71.html.
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82. Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 59.
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87. Lane, "Black Philadelphia," 42.
88. Du Bois, *Philadelphia Negro*, 49-50.
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92. Carter G. Woodson, "Tells of the Contributions of 'West Indian Negro' to U. S.: Will Discuss Topic at Big Historical Meeting in New York," *Pittsburgh Courier*, October 31, 1931, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
93. Haynes, "West Indian Journalist," 15.
94. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 55.
95. Ruggles et al., "IPUMS USA: Version 13.0."
96. A. M. W. Malliet, "'Segregation Race's Greatest Menace,' Says West Indian Writer: 'Inferiority Complex' Most Dreaded Spectre American Negroes Must Try to Crush; Writer Pays Tribute to British Subjects Who Helped Put Over Victory Life in New York," *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 23, 1927, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
97. S. Haynes, "Philadelphia Seething with Intolerance and Prejudice," *Philadelphia Tribune*, April 27, 1933, ProQuest Historical Newspapers. The term *intra-racial*, although not in many dictionaries, means "within the same race." That could mean, for instance, individual Blacks who interact with one another or groups of Blacks (Afro-Caribbeans and native-born Black Americans) interacting with one another. I use the term the same way Ira Reid does in *Negro Immigrant*, when he says, "The Negro immigrant undergoes a reorganization of status involving adjustment to an intra-racial situation and to an inter-racial one" (26).
98. Haynes, "West Indian Journalist," 15.
99. Reid, *Negro Immigrant*, 187.
100. Woodson, "Tells of the Contributions."
101. Suzanne Model, *West Indian Immigrants: A Black Success Story?* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 72.
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103. "West Indians Flock Here."
104. James, *Holding Aloft the Banner*, 29.
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