

Black Migration: A study of Southern California population movement from Los Angeles County to the Inland Empire, 1940-2000

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The Inland Empire refers to the Southern California suburban region located in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties. Both counties rank in the top 10 for California's largest counties, 1980-2000; and San Bernardino county has been consistently placed in the top 10 since 1940 (Berlo, 2002). Currently, the Inland Empire has a population of approximately 3.2 million, a jump 12 times its population in 1940. The area maintains an unusually high minority suburban population share of 53% relative to other metropolitan areas nationally (Frey, 2003). Internal migration, defined as a permanent or semi permanent change in residence within the same country, is inherently spatial. Migration out of Los Angeles county has been fairly consistent since the mid 1960s, with greater than 5,000 blacks moving to the Inland Empire between 1975 and 1980 alone (DeGraff, 2001). Moreover, the number of African-Americans suburbanizing into San Bernardino and Riverside counties doubled between 1980 and 1990 (DeGraff, 2001). Such movement from a regional standpoint is distinct and arguably comparable to the national post-war phenomenon of the United States where mass scale migration among African Americans has occurred since 1915. The Great Black Migration, as it has since been labeled, resulted in approximately 5.5 million black southerners migrating to the north, east and finally the west in two waves following World Wars I and II. Ever since those times upwardly mobile African Americans have continued to move believing they could have better lives on the outskirts of towns rather than in its center. Thus, a proxy for capturing migration change, barring complex time-consuming formulaic calculations of migration indices, is to measure the temporal growth patterns of the population within the areas of interest.

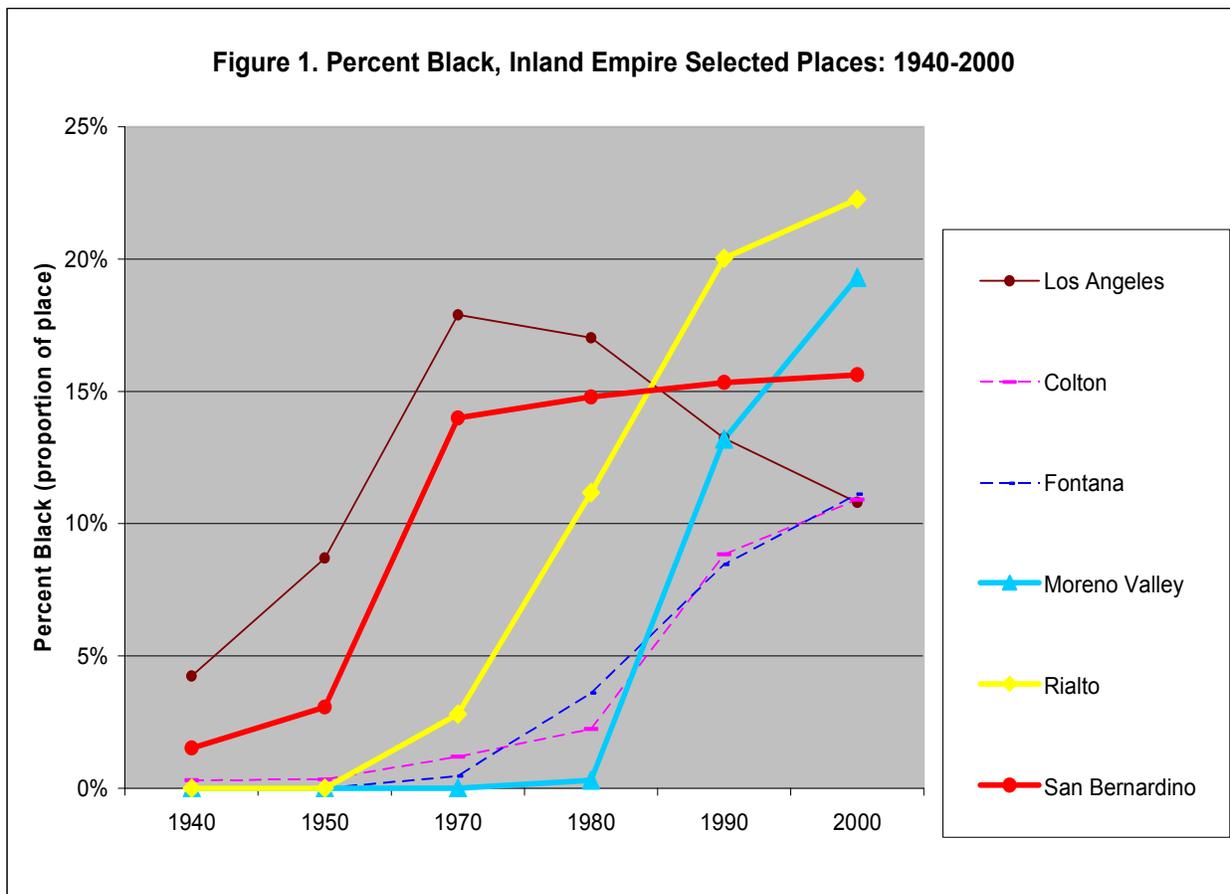
Although several sources have explored migration of African Americans (Taylor, 1998 ; DeGraff, 2001; Sides 2001,2003), relatively few survey the black migration experience in the urban West and following the war during the 1940 to 1970 time period (Reich, 2006). The point of this research is to investigate the migration event where several hundred residents from Los Angeles County migrated inland to the Riverside and San Bernardino counties referred to as "The Inland Empire." This study is intended to add to the growing body of literature focused on

the black migrant experience within Southern California, covering the 60-year post World War II time period between 1940 and 2000. Furthermore, the research is intended to delve deeper than where current literature ceased; scratching the surface with a trend analysis of suburbanization in California (DeGraff, 2001) by providing a more intimate, local perspective from African-Americans who made the move to the Inland Empire. The objective of this study is to examine the magnitude of population growth, as well as identify variables and events that explain why a significant number of African-Americans moved from Los Angeles County to the Inland Empire using historical sources and census data.

The importance of this study is grounded in the conclusion of previous documentation revealing relatively few studies that explore the black migration experience in the urban West. According to De Graaf (2001), California is the ideal representative for postwar suburbanization. Investigating the movement of African Americans in Southern California is distinct because so many people in the state chose to move from the urban city to its edges. This action falls counter to the sociological paradigm within residential/suburbanization literature on place stratification which suggests that African Americans are largely bound to the center of a metropolitan area. This study is intended to add to the current body of literature that focuses on the black migrant and black suburban experience.

This investigation probes four primary questions aimed at characterizing the migration phenomenon for African Americans at several levels: 1) Why did a significant number of African-Americans move from Los Angeles County to the Inland Empire from 1940 to 2000? What triggers if any preceded the onset of such a large rate of movement? 2) What time period had the greatest growth of African Americans into Riverside and San Bernardino Counties? 3) How can the blacks that moved to the Inland Empire be characterized? 4) Are greater proportions of African Americans bound to the center of a metropolitan area as described in the literature? How do other similarly sized areas compare to the phenomenon in Los Angeles? How similar or different are the proportions of blacks in the Inland Empire suburb relative to urban LA County? Historical sources relied upon include United States Census of the Population data, newspaper articles and interviews. The following parameters will be calculated and analyzed by decade and for the entire study period, 1940-2000: 1) Age/Sex composition; 2) Percent black, white and percent change; and 3) education and income class distributions.

The study sample consists of 20 cities located within the Riverside and San Bernardino County limits, the city of Los Angeles, the four counties of Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino and Riverside, and the state of California. Within the two counties the cities of Moreno Valley, Rialto, and San Bernardino have the greatest change in the percentage of African Americans and whites from 1970 to 1990 (Figure 1), which is consistent with the rural to suburban developmental transition that occurred in the region during this time. Moreover, as of the 2000 Census Rialto (22%), Moreno Valley (19%), and San Bernardino (16%) maintain the greatest proportion of black residents. For these reasons, these cities have been chosen for further analysis in order to address the research questions previously stated.



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