



Bridges of Memory : Chicago's First Wave of Black Migration

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A collection of interviews with African Americans who came to Chicago from the South.

In their first great migration to Chicago that began during World War I, African Americans came from the South seeking a better life--and fleeing a Jim Crow system of racial prejudice, discrimination, and segregation. What they found was much less than what they'd hoped for, but it was much better than what they'd come from--and in the process they set in motion vast changes not only in Chicago but also in the whole fabric of American society. This book, the first of three volumes, revisits this momentous chapter in American history with those who lived it.

Oral history of the first order, *Bridges of Memory* lets us hear the voices of those who left social, political, and economic oppression for political freedom and opportunity such as they'd never known--and for new forms of prejudice and segregation. These children and grandchildren of ex-slaves found work in the stockyards and steel mills of Chicago, settled and started small businesses in the "Black Belt" on the South Side, and brought forth the jazz, blues, and gospel music that the city is now known for. Historian Timuel D. Black, Jr., himself the son of first-generation migrants to Chicago, interviews a wide cross-section of African Americans whose remarks and reflections touch on issues ranging from fascism to Jim Crow segregation to the origin of the blues. Their recollections comprise a vivid record of a neighborhood, a city, a society, and a people undergoing dramatic and unprecedented changes.

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