



1924

African American professionals

In 1924, there were 80,000 African Americans living in the city of Detroit, double the population four years before. Groups like the Detroit Urban League worked hard to find jobs, housing and medical assistance for the newcomers. Dodge, Ford and Packard were all offering jobs to African American men in their factories. Most of these jobs were unskilled labor-intensive jobs and no company saw much room for improvement. Women still found most work as domestics. Some businesses had been created to support the African American community, but professionals were scarce. In 1924 there were 35 physicians, 24 lawyers, 24 dentists, 15 pharmacists, 8 social service workers, 26 nurses, 2 accountants, 2 architects, 7 bookkeepers, 18 stenographers, 29 public school teachers, 25 postmen, 10 postal clerks and 8 policemen representing the black community in Detroit.

¹ African-American men at work in the foundry.

Courtesy of the National Automotive Heritage Collection, Detroit Public Library

² African American Nurses

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-USE6-D-009002]

³ African American Doctor

Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, [LC-USF34-038657-D]

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1924 African American professionals

Credits:

Zunz, Olivier. *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development, and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982. Print.

Keywords/Topics:

Business, Work/Jobs

Questions:

1. Were most African Americans in Detroit laborers or professionals?
2. Who helped southern migrants find jobs and housing?
3. What companies gave factory jobs to African Americans?
4. Who are some well-known black doctors and lawyers?

Links to Internet Websites:

<http://bentley.umich.edu/research/publications/migration/ch3.php>

<http://www.historycooperative.org/cgi-bin/justtop.cgi?act=justtop&url=http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/89.4/hine.html>

<http://www.biography.com/blackhistory/people/legal.jsp>

1924 African American Professionals



Courtesy of the National Automotive Heritage Collections, Detroit Public Library

Most African American autoworkers were placed in the foundry, which was the lowest level of work that could be done in a plant. The conditions were terrible, it was dangerous, and the air quality was unfit to breathe.

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The two nurses pictured here are wrapping bandages. Black women in the medical field were extremely rare at this time and the number of black nurses would not rise until World War II.

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Here a black doctor checks on his patient. Most, if not all, black doctors had strictly African American clientele. Many Whites did not think black doctors were capable of giving adequate care. Dr. Albert B. Cleage founded Dunbar Hospital, the first hospital in Michigan for African Americans. The hospital provided jobs and care for those living in the community.